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Apples to Apples: Special Needs Education in the United States and Denmark

Maria Knuckley Robinson

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**APPLES TO APPLES:
SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND DENMARK**

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DEDICATION

In memory of my father, “Doc,” who was the first highly educated professional with special needs to influence my perspective on life and learning. For my mother, who taught me that an education was more important than any other act I would accomplish in my life. She reiterated often that strengthening my mind would give me the freedom to make my own decisions and be independent in the world. To my husband and daughter, who always support me with reminders that I am intelligent and accomplished and have the power to change the world. And lastly to my brilliant brother, Albert, who has continually been my saving editor at all hours of the morning with patience and nurturing care.

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ABSTRACT

This comparative case study is designed to uncover varying approaches to teaching students with special needs based on the perceptions and practices of teachers. A closer look is made into the specific experiences of educators that resulted in Learner-Centered approaches to curriculum and instruction. Data was collected through published documents, questionnaires, and interviews of teachers who instruct students with special needs in the United States and Denmark. In the United States, data from educators in a private specialized education program in Georgia was used to compare data from public education teachers in a Danish Municipality. The study builds on current global special needs education research concerning teacher perspectives of the special education system, their use of Learner-Centered philosophies and practices, and historical perspectives of the special education system. There is little comparative research that connects teachers' perceptions of the issues of equity in the special needs' education field and their ability to combat those inequalities with practice. The purpose of this study is to reveal the similarities that exist in the two systems adding to the body of research that provides motivations and practices for equitably teaching students with special needs. Implications of the study support adapting individualized, non-traditional, learner-centered approaches to teaching special needs students based on similar successes in the United States and Denmark.

Keywords: Special Needs, Learner-Centered Ideology, Denmark, United States

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
DSA	International Conference on Disabilities Studies, Arts and Education
FAPE.....	Free Appropriate Public Education
ICDS	International Conference on Disabilities Studies
IDEA.....	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP.....	Individualized Education Program
LCI	Learning-Centered Ideology
LMS	Learning Management System
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
NT	Neurotypical
OECD.....	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PARC	Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children
PCD.....	Partnership for Child Development
PISA.....	Programme for International Assessment
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PPR	Program Performance Report
REI	Regular Education Initiative
SEN.....	Special Education Needs
UK.....	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

US United States
USA United States of America

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established in 1942 by the nations of Europe as a reaction to the events that occurred during World War II (Lozano & Yildiz, 2015). “According to UNESCO, education is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights” (2015, p. 91). In March of 1990, UNESCO convened at the World Conference on Education for All to adopt new documents, The World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs addressing the continuing need for an education for all (UNESCO, 1994). The purpose spelled out in the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs stated that every person, no matter the age, should be able to benefit from an education and the opportunities that it provides. Their aim was to universalize access to education and promote equity in education. Specifically stated are the learning needs of students with special needs and the action steps that need to be taken to provide an equal access to education as an integral part of the education system.

As affirmed by these statements from UNESCO, there is a need for continued research to advance educational learning environments for students with special needs. A firsthand perspective of these environments comes from the educators who instruct these students. Gathering these perspectives can be used to develop plans for action and reform.

In the special education community, discourse is often reserved for the elite in educational leadership and study. International conferences, such as the International Conference on Disability Studies (ICDS) and the International Conference on Disability Studies, Arts and Education (DSAE), speak to the benefit of bringing together critical disabilities studies, arts, and education from the perspectives of academic scientists, researchers, and research scholars (WASET, 2019 and DSAE, 2019). While this discourse is important to the special needs community, the utility of their findings is often out of reach for teachers in the field. According to Saha (2009), teachers are at the lowest level of the hierarchical structure of education professionals, while educational research knowledge is created by professional researchers in institutions at the top of the hierarchy. Traditionally the audience for educational research is other researchers, resulting in the thinking that their information is useless to practicing teachers (Saha, 2009). Specific to this research, there is a need for practicing special needs teachers at the bottom to engage in international discourse aimed at fostering educational equity through the encouragement of efficacy and individualization via learner-centered teaching.

This research study focuses on comparing teachers' perspectives in two countries to glean the similarities and differences that present themselves when educating students with special needs. A look at the intricate motivations for entering the field of special needs education, specific to each country, sheds light on the methods that teachers enlist to build efficacy towards individualized learning. Bringing this discussion of perspectives to teachers in two countries that have a variety of pathways and influences developing their views, broadens the debate concerning equity in special needs education.

This critical discourse begins with discussions of equity in special needs education. Equity according to Besser and Fellow (2014) pertains to “all individuals, regardless of ‘markers of difference’ including but not limited to race, ethnicity, income, disability, and age, have equal privilege and opportunity to access the basic needs, services, skills and assets required to succeed in life” (p 22). In special needs education, equity becomes a part of design, practice, and

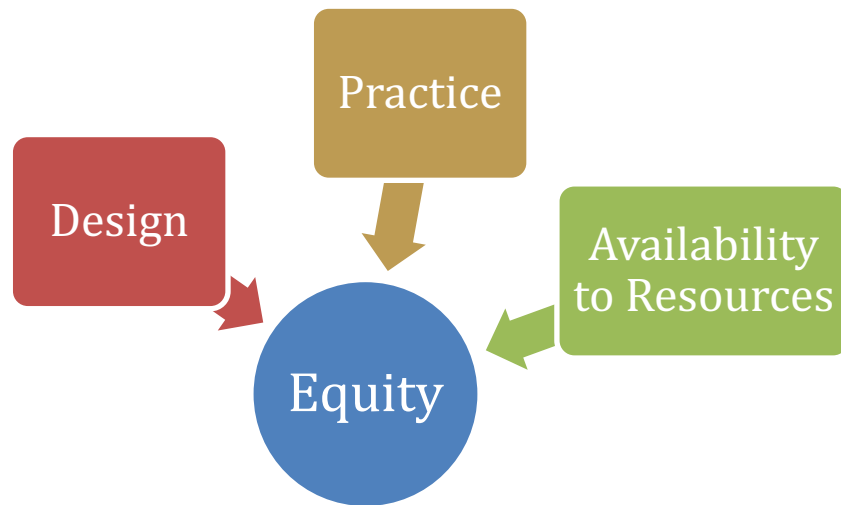


Figure 1.1 Special Needs Areas of Equity

availability to resources. The design of special needs education encompasses the tracking and placement of students with special needs, while practice involves identification, inclusion, and providing support (Liasidou & Symeou, 2018). The third arm of equity concerns how resources are applied to provide a strong education for all with direct resources based on greatest need and targets for future needs (2018).

Understanding the larger realm of equity from an educational standpoint exposes the pathway to equity in special needs education. According to Spring (2011), schools in the early nineteenth century were the means to ending poverty, equalizing opportunities, and expanding the future wealth of a nation. This equitable aim continued into the twentieth century with vocational programs, standardized testing, and ability levels aimed

towards the schools' goal to prepare students for the labor market and producing greater national wealth (Spring, 2011). As education entered the twenty-first century, the neo-liberal policy for education was to produce students who would thrive and dominate in a world market (Wiborg, 2013).

Equity, as defined by Besser and Fellow (2014), expresses the vastness of the influences on perspectives towards individuals and their “markers of difference.” They emphasize the long list of influencers that often include social equity issues of race, ethnicity, and income. In spite of these influences equity requires that individuals have “equal privilege and opportunity to access the basic needs, services, skills and assets required to succeed in life” (Besser & Fellow, 2014).

In 2015, more than half a million 15-year olds participated in a global education survey performed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), known as the Programme for International Assessment (PISA). One of the criteria in evaluating a countries' educational growth pertained to social equity. Guy and McCandless (2012) defined social equity as the distribution of fairness specifically as it is demonstrated in the disadvantaged and their lack of access to social capital. According to OECD (2015), "Schools should provide a good education for all students, regardless of their parents' education or career. PISA assesses to what extent differences in educational outcomes are associated with the social status of parents as well as the performance gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students" (p. 1). The study revealed that a comparison between the United States and Denmark demonstrated a steady decline from both in the impacts of social background on educational growth since 2006, indicating that differences in education outcomes were less about social background in 2015. This

comparison is important to the study presented because of the narrowing of the gap of socio-economic background playing a part in performance. Strengthening the implications towards educators having the power to affect change despite parameters of race, ethnicity, income, or special need increases the benefits of a global discourse on practice.

Statement of the Problem

In regard to the United States and Denmark, there is a need for collaboration amongst educators towards improvement in the area of special needs education. In a special issue of *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* this need is affirmed in the gathering of information to ascertain the nature and extent of variation across developed countries in the use of special schools and classes (Riddell et al., 2016). As cited in Alshebou (2018), Almofarej, Yousef, and Almahbob state this trend is evident in teacher training programs recommending that instruction include; modern international trends, support for creativity and novelty, awareness of international diversity, and acknowledgment of diverse educational problems and challenges that exist.

Research Questions

This study examined the motivations and teaching practices of teachers across two continents for students with special needs. The following three research questions informed data collection from classroom teachers and arts teachers:

Research Questions:

1. What motivates teachers in the United States and Denmark to work with students who have special needs?
2. How do teachers in the United States and Denmark perceive inclusion, individualized instruction, and nontraditional instruction?

3. How are teachers in the United States and Denmark influenced by Learner-Centered Ideologies?

Theoretical Framework

The study presented relies on Learner-Centered Ideologies to formulate the perceptions of Special Needs Educators. Learner-centered approaches connect the varying influences from culture, policy, and curriculum, thus increasing the utility of special needs education reform (Mulholland & Cumming, 2016; Schiro, 2013). In the context of LCI, educators can impart in students with special needs a sense of individual purpose and goals for learning (2016; 2013).

The Learner Centered Ideology

Michael Schiro (2013) provided the perspective of Learner Centered Ideology, which began from the ideas of John Dewey and the Lab School. In John Dewey's (1929) *My Pedagogic Creed*, he lays out his beliefs of the purpose of education: "I Believe that - all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race" (pg. 291). Dewey's lab school worked to build a partnership where the student shared in the learning process through natural experiences from social interaction and discovery (1929). This ideology of schools that focus on the student and their experiences is the hallmark of the Learner Centered Ideology (LCI). The goal of LCI is to construct learning environments that foster growth in students as they build meaning for themselves through learning and knowledge (2013). The lens of LCI guided in the selection of school facilities, as well as the formation of research questions. The structure presently incorporated into the Danish educational system's strong history of Nordic teaching philosophies that include active learning environments, mirrors the

individualized activity schooling setting present at the specialized learning school in the United States.

There are four types of Learner Centered Schooling approaches that reach students in a different manner. The four approaches are the 1) Ideal School, 2) Activity School, 3) Organic School, and 4) Integrated School. For example, The Ideal School, focuses the school around the needs and interests of the students, rather than those of the educators, administration, parents, politicians, or the school curriculum (Schiro, 2013). While the Learner-Centered School consistently focuses the school around the child, the second type of Learning Centered Schooling, The Activity School, looks the most like Dewey's Lab School with its focus on student experiences (2013). According to Schiro (2013), the Activity School experience includes, firsthand experiences with reality, experiences with physical materials and people, experiences involving physical activity, and experiences inside and outside the classroom. The third style moves beyond the individual experience to emphasize the growth mindset as being organic and naturally existing (2013). The Organic School functions to develop the natural growth of the individual child, while offering multiple experiences based on the interest of the child instead of just one activity at a time within a classroom. The fourth style, the Integrated School, is a unified approach that utilizes integrated knowledge and a less structured schedule (2013). The Integrated School's approach to learning attempts to integrate students' school life with their home life, thus connecting these traditionally separated entities into a learning that is holistic in nature (2013). The schools presented in this research study are a combination of these learner-centered ideologies with a strong focus

in the Activity School. The nature of learning is student-centered through firsthand experiences set at the student's pace in their natural learning cycle.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this comparative case study was to gather information demonstrating the history and future progression of special needs education from the United States and Denmark. Specifically, motivations for teaching students with special needs, methods used in teaching as it relates to inclusion, individuality, and non-traditional curriculum are shared from each country for the purpose of giving concrete transferable skills to activate change. These comparisons can be used to strengthen each country's effectiveness in their practices and policies as they pertain to students with special needs.

Overview of Methodology

Merriam (2009) defined the nature of this research thusly: qualitative research is performed by researchers who seek to understand people and their perceptions of firsthand experiences that construct their worlds and meaning. These research questions embody this explanation. Studying the perceptions of teachers focuses on the nature of interpreting experiences and meaning.

This research study utilized a comparative case study design. Delwyn Goodrick (2014) described in a brief on methodologies for UNICEF's Office of Research:

"Comparative case studies can be used to answer questions about causal attribution and contribution when it is not feasible or desirable to create a comparison group or control group" (p. 1). He further validated the use of comparative case study in understanding how the context of an intervention can influence its success and its alignment to the intended outcome of the intervention (2014). Goodrick's (2014) brief broke down the

patterns of research behaviors that are necessary to effectively compare two or more cases into clarifying the key questions and purpose of the study, identifying theories, defining the cases to be included and how they will be conducted, defining how the evidence will be collected, analyzed, and synthesized, considering alternative explanations for the results, and reporting the findings.

The essence of this study included basic qualitative study guidelines, focusing on meaning, understanding and process with a purposeful sample of data collected through interviews. The data analysis was inductive and comparative with findings that are richly descriptive and presented as themes or categories. These devices are used to uncover the complexity of global perceptions through the collection and analysis of interviews that guide the direction of the results and conclusions.

According to Glesne (2011), to understand social phenomena from the perspective of the participants of a study, it is important to look at various approaches of interpretivist qualitative inquiry as orientations rather than categories. As an art educator with years of experience working with special needs students in an inclusive classroom, this research holds possibilities from an interpretive point of view, including the investigation of a phenomenon, population, or general condition (2011). In choosing a comparative case study as a vehicle to gather information about the complexity of the participants' experiences the results are unique and individualized (2011).

Significance of the Study

For the purpose of the research study, I opted to focus on specialized education for students with disabilities with a corresponding specialized selection of teachers. Researchers have examined related sites to investigate the similarities and differences in

disability policies (Norwich, 2010; Andrews & Brown, 2015; and Webster, 2016), but not the teacher perceptions on their motivations and teaching practices. This study furthers understanding of perceptions held by teachers who instruct students with special needs. This understanding is needed to enhance experiences as teachers receive training before and during their teaching tenure. The need to provide open discourse between teachers about the practices of individualization and the use of efficacy seen in Learner-Centered schooling can be used to enhance professional training in United States public education system. Denmark's public-school system has mandated inclusion regulations that incorporate Learner-Centered ideologies (Moos, 2014). In the United States, these ideologies are more prominent in the private special needs education setting since it is unbound by public schooling regulations (Howard School, 2019).

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study in the scope of the data collected and the limitation of time allotted to gathering the data. The case study selection of three subjects from the United States and three subjects from Denmark all observed and interviewed in a twelve-week time span did not allow for generalization or longevity of results.

Limitations are also present because of the language barrier between English and Danish. The school selected for the study contains educators who have studied English as their second language, but there were some words that did not translate. In including views and school identities of the physical facility and its educators, the interpretation of titles and names are at risk of not being true examples of the culture and language.

The scope of the study has been controlled for interview purposes so that quality time and attention can be given to each participant. The limitations in scope have the

potential to hinder the reliability of the data gathered. There could be lower occurrences of patterns because of the limited number of subjects represented.

Conclusion

The benefits of global discourse are evident in many researchers approaches to reform efforts in special needs education. Kritzer (2012), spoke to the benefits of the United States serving as a model for other countries attempting to create uniformity of the process by which special needs students are served with the goal of ensuring that all children have access to an appropriate education. In the true sense of giving and taking, it is important that the US does not hold all the power in innovative thought. Engsig and Johnstone (2014) referred to studies acknowledging the mimicking of the Finnish education system, opening the possibilities of connections to a diversity of areas of the world. "In other cases where money is not an incentive, policy borrowing is utilised as a mechanism for legitimizing desired changes within a particular country by pointing to external examples of success" (2014, p. 469). Through this study, the researcher documented the discourse of perceptions towards the motivations of teachers and their practices teaching students with special needs education in the US and Denmark.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter One an introduction of the study was presented. A complete overview of the methodology and its limitations is provided to guide the study. Chapter Two presents a survey of research and commentary related to the topic. This includes research from Denmark and the United States based on historical perspectives, an overview of the special education system, and an understanding of learner-centered approaches in special education teaching practices. Related research is used to understand the need for the

study and the pattern of organizing the background material, data collection, and findings. Chapter Three describes research methods to be used in sampling, data collection, and data analysis and includes qualitative structures to gain insight into the phenomenon of teachers' perceptions. In Chapter Four, the focus is on the analysis of the data collected in its relationships to the research questions. An emphasis is given to abandoning assumptions and remaining objective in gathering all data that may present in the search. Leading to Chapter Five's conclusions and implications for instructional practice that can be transferred to teaching in the United States and Denmark. Also, a discussion for the study's broader implications to the field of teaching is presented. Finally, this will lead to conclusions that impact policies and trends in teaching students with special needs.

Definition of Terms

Student with special needs: This student is described in The Third Code of Practice (Wedell, 2017) as a child or young person who has learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. According to IDEA a child must fall under one of thirteen categories to be eligible for special education. These include, autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment (including ADHD), specific learning disability (including dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia, and other learning issues), speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment (including blindness) (IDEA, 1997).

Primary teacher: This term refers to the teacher solely responsible for the special needs' classroom and students. They serve as the students' advocate, Individual Education Plan (IEP) creator, and overall instructor.

Assistant teacher: This term refers to the teacher who assists the primary teacher in instruction and monitoring of students.

Pedagogue or arts teacher: This term refers to the teacher, usually in an inclusive setting, who teaches creative-based instruction, including arts and crafts. This instructor may not have an education background but must have an artistic background.

Exclusion: This term is explained by Emanuelsson (1998) as “the outspoken aim for organizing special classes to give special help and support to students with disabilities” (p. 99).

Integration: This term means to keep or make something whole and well-blended together (Emanuelsson, 1998), and “for the purposes of special towards what has to be done in order to make normally existing differences between individuals accepted as normal” (1998, p. 98).

Segregation: This term refers to the separation for special treatment or observation of individuals or items from a larger group. In Emanuelsson's (1998) work he further describes that “if nothing else happens to a group besides adding a “deviant” person, it is easy to understand that this person may very well be just as isolated and “segregated” within the group as when placed in a special classroom, group, or school” (p. 98).

Diversity: This term for the purposes of this study is defined as “[the differences] in most preconditions for learning as well as in other important characteristics that affect how [students] partake in school activities” (Emanuelsson, 1998, p. 95).

Deviance: This term is referred to as “a concept which is more likely to be connected with the presumed negative part of the normal distribution of human characteristics – whether measured or estimated” (Emanuelsson, 1998, p. 95).

Labeling: The term is used for children experiencing difficulties in learning that are identified and “labeled” as having a disability (needing special education) (Norwich, 2010).

Socialistic: This term will only be used to describe the system in present day Denmark, where socialistic tendencies advocates the ownership and control of the means of production and distribution of capital, land, etc., in the community.

Democracy: This term is used to describe democracy as it applies to education. "The purpose of democracy is so to organize society that each member may develop his personality primarily through activities designed for the well-being of his fellow members and of society as a whole" (Spring, 2011, p. 241).

Democratic monarchy: This term is used to describe the present-day political system in Denmark, where Denmark is a democracy and a monarchy at the same time. But it is a constitutional monarchy, which means that the power of the monarch is limited by the Constitutional Act (Danish Parliament, 1953).

Capitalism: This term will be used to describe the United States economy as a system in which investment in and ownership of the means of production, distribution,

and exchange of wealth is made and maintained chiefly by private individuals or corporations, especially as contrasted to corporate or state-owned means of wealth.

Collective competence: This term refers to all participants taking responsibility for all members of a group as a precondition of integration.

Exclusion programs: The term refers to involving one-on-one instruction and educational support services for students with special needs that are provided outside of the typical school environment (Masters in Special Education Program Guide, 2019).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this comparative case study was to collect and review data from two countries whose pathway to present day special education has identifying markers that demonstrate similarities and differences that aid in advancing learner-centered environments for students with special needs. These comparisons can be used to strengthen each country's effectiveness in their willingness to learn from each other. Encouraging discourse and action has the potential to enact beneficial changes for the special needs education system.

The literature review presents information that supports the understanding of perceptions of special needs teachers, remaining focused on four directions of research; historical perspectives in ideas of difference and diversity, an overview of special education policy on inclusion, innovative characteristics of special needs practices, and related studies.

Historical Significance of Special Needs Education

The ideas of commerce and economic growth have persisted in the United States encouraging educating the masses to become the work force. Joel Spring (2010) wrote about the historical framework of education helping to understand the progression of educational reform in the United States. His texts explained Horace Mann's proposals of "human capital" and "equality of opportunity" found in the United States (Spring, 2010). "Simply stated, human capital theory contends that investment in education will improve

the quality of workers and, consequently, increase the wealth of the community” (2010, p. 19). Equality of opportunity is defined as affording all individuals the same chance to compete for jobs and wealth, based on their education and experience (2010). These concepts are what influenced changes in the system, including special education. In 1975, the passing of Public Law 94-142 later referred to as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), was an example of this continued path of equality. The public law provided an equal opportunity for all children with disabilities to attend school with children in the regular education system (Spring, 2010).

Virtue and Vogler (2008) explained in their work interpreting Danish fairytales that Denmark, on the other hand, has vastly different origins, involving lords and tyrants conquering lands. This atmosphere did not change until between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries when the size of Denmark was reduced in terms of both land area and population (Virtue & Vogler, 2008). Wiehl (1997) characterized this aspect of Danish history as “a history of losses,” yet the Danish people refused to be devastated by these events (as cited in Virtue and Vogler, 2008, p. 31). The transformation of outward loss to inward gain in Denmark is based on the core values of cooperation and inclusiveness. The central idea that became a slogan of the Danish Society in 1866, embodies the idea of accepting the loss of external territories without allowing the loss to ruin their society within (Virtue and Vogler, 2008). This mindset provides direct lineage to the current equity and protectiveness that the Danes provide for their citizens (Virtue and Vogler, 2008). Thus, while differing in history, the educational systems of the United States and Denmark both reach the same conclusion: to give all an equal opportunity to learn and succeed. These ideals are explicitly contained in the definition of egalitarianism defined

by Virtue (2008) as “the ideology that everybody is equal or should aim to be equal” (p. 30).

Each country's historical identity of equality is confronted by their ideas of difference. The United States in Horace Mann's notion of equality of opportunity and Denmark's notion of egalitarianism are challenged when deviance from the norm enters the discourse. History in the United States and Denmark is riddled with exclusion of those who are different from the “norm” requiring regulations and consortiums to define the acceptability of diversity and demand inclusion for all into society (Lozano & Yildiz, 2015). This causally relates to the formation of educational reforms that specialize in special needs education, forcing society to recognize and value all persons independent of difference and diversity.

Ideas of Difference

According to Turner and Louis (1996), the need for equal opportunities exists because of society's perceptions of difference and its effects on students with special needs. Within historical literature there is a question that stimulates the debate pertaining to special needs populations, “What is ‘normal’?” and “Who gets to be part of the ‘masses’?” These questions are explored in society’s ideas of difference or deviance from the ‘norm.’ According to Becker (1963), the notion of deviance always is socially constructed: social groups control what we define as deviance by making rules that cannot be held by all and then labeling noncompliance as being outside the norm. Many of these debates of difference began with the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960’s. The inclusion of students with disabilities is initiated commonly by civil rights issues. The desire to include students with disabilities into general education classes with appropriate

support systems is consistent with the mission of civil rights. Smith (1998) supported this phenomenon and stated that civil rights missions foster education reform efforts by forcing schools to be more responsive to the diversity naturally found in the student makeup. As citizens began to question the rights of individuals, marginalized populations and their differences were brought to the surface to protect. Rights movements came from a long history of labeling and devaluing of special populations leading to a demand for restructuring education and perceptions.

In the United States, this labeling of deviance and marginalizing populations began as early as the late eighteen hundred (Spring, 2010). A rise of compulsory education laws demanded that all children attend school starting this pattern of marginalization (2010). "In Bureaucratic Order and Special Children: Urban Schools, 1890s-1940s, Joseph Tropea argued that compulsory education laws resulted in school administrators having to accommodate children with disabilities and those with behavior problems" (Spring, 2010, p. 285). A resistance emerged from teachers and parents equating this population as "backward" or "at-risk" and a danger to the learning of the whole. According to Spring (2010), these laws of compulsory attendance did not eliminate exclusion of students with special needs, but just changed exclusion to segregation within the school.

Throughout history in the United States the label "laggard" was used to segregate these inclusion students. Dechenes, Cuban, and Tyack, (2001) describe the term laggards or retardation in this era as not having the same psychological stigma as today, but as referring to students who were not progressing at the same rate as the general population in schools. "Laggards" is often a term used to inspire reform efforts, but often it is only

used to describe reform and not a term for non-mainstream students (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001). The danger of these terms is the implication that these students were somehow deficient in character and not just a lack of mental capacity (2001). Many other reasons were attributed to this phenomenon, but the identified culprit according to Arye (2004) was the curriculum. Arye (2004) sounded a theme in defining curriculum in this matter that were echoed by social reformers throughout the twentieth century, “the 'college preparatory' curriculum that had held sway for so long needed to be replaced by a curriculum attuned to the needs of a new population and a new industrial order” (p. 87). This onslaught of labels that continues to plague special needs education is not exclusive to the United States.

Norwich (2008) performed studies comparing Europe to the United States by examining the perspectives of teachers on the dilemma of difference. The problem to solve in European schools was whether to recognize these differences in students. The negative connotations associated with labels was deemed a course of action that would result in students being denied opportunities and rejected from social situations (Norwich, 2008). This philosophical dilemma is battled in most populations. “How our educational systems address the needs of students who are determined to be ‘different’ (or having varying degrees of ‘differentness’) reveals marked similarities across Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and the United States” (Smith, 1998, p. 162). Even in the Danish society’s structure these dilemmas appear through egalitarianism and equality as noted by Virtue (2007) in his study of Danish Folktales. Philosophically, if students can experience the nurturing of one another socially and academically, they will broaden their acceptance of differences (1998). These individual needs set in a philosophical debate lead to

researchers developing theories about their effectiveness and nature in affecting societal issues.

In Emanuelsson's (1998) research, this idea that diversity equates to deviance is studied to adjust perceptions of students with special needs. The value attached to positive and negative differences as good or bad links these ideas to deviance and in a presumed negative function of human character. "Negatively perceived differences in more highly valued human characteristics bear the greatest risks of being devalued as deviances" (Emanuelsson, 1998, p. 96). Instead of celebrating differences that are the essence of an egalitarian view, labels are given to students to de-marginalize their places in the whole. The labels associated with special needs prevent students from belonging to the school society. "The negative perspective is that 'difference' reflects lower status, less value, perpetuating inequalities and poor-quality provision and unfair treatment" (Norwich, 2010, p. 291). This negative mindset has unfortunate consequences for students that are diagnosed as different from normal society, particularly for students' opportunities to function in daily activities and life (Emanuelsson, 1998). The other side of this equation is that difference can be positive, reflecting individuality in needs and interest, but also in what one has to offer the whole (2010).

Norwich (2008) suggested that dilemmas of difference are important to legislation and policy formation for social policy, ethnicity, gender, and special education. Norwich (2010) used the idea of difference to guide his study of perceptions of teachers on inclusion and the dilemmas of difference. Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack (2001) utilized historical perspectives on schools and students to develop theories about the special needs education system. "Finally, we argue that educators need to focus on adapting the school

better to the child as the most feasible way to remedy the mismatch in public education and to prevent in the standards movement much of the labeling and stratification that has worked to the detriment of students in previous eras” (2001, p. 528). Deschenes et al. (2001) theorized that the failure of students is created by labels and poor curriculum and that the students are not to blame. Historical labels have continually placed students with needs in the deviant frame. "Some of the terms that educators used to describe poor performers – immature, born-late, overgrown – also showed an emerging notion of the normal student that automatically made the slow student into a deviant category” (2001, p. 531). Emanuelsson (1998) theorized that students who fall outside the realms of normal are believed in need of special education, but also considered as causing too many disturbances. That is, diversity is transformed into deviancy.

From Difference to Diverse

The National Council on Disability and the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusion Education both publish resources and data to support special needs education. In following international trends set by like agencies, the fight to keep moving beyond a purely structural debate, to one that draws heavily on social justice and political discourse and argues that no student with disabilities should be excluded as the price of appropriate schooling, continues (Ferguson, 2008). The obstacles to these strides for change are the perceptions that have been slow to adjust, rooted in the idea that diversity equates to deviance from the norm. “The normal student was the one who proceeded at the regular pace demanded by the imperatives of a graded school – the batch processing of pupils by the school bureaucracy” (Deschenes, Cuban & Tyack, 2001, p. 531).

Diversity is extremely important to the dialogue on difference. The mindset of teachers and administrators as it moves from seeing the deficit mentality of differences to one of embracing diversity demonstrates a shift in the inclusion of students with special needs. Alison Peacock (2016), an executive head teacher at a school in England, wrote about the impacts of celebrating diversity in her article *Instead of Forcing Pupils to Fit, We Make Room for Them*. She provided anecdote after anecdote of the individual successes of students when diversity is celebrated and rewarded. Peacock (2016) claimed that "any school that greets diversity and difference with warmth and acceptance celebrates them as such" (p. 17). Her school is praised for the inclusion of all children in the classroom without the need for specialist to remove students to address their needs. The culture of the school is one that encourages community diversity and building of the individual strengths of its students (2016). "Our richly diverse community helps us all to accept, value and embrace difference and to understand that this is what makes us united" (Peacock, 2016, p. 17).

Diversity and Inclusion

Ainscow (2005) stated that changing the system of ordinary skills is a rights issue aimed at accommodating those who are different. In this promotion, inclusion often is misused and misrepresented in the school system across the globe. According to Emanuelsson (1998), there are innate differences in the ideas of integration and inclusion. They are not synonymous; even though they do have qualities in common there are also differences. "These differences, however, are a consequence of misusing the concept of integration, which has the ideological and semantic meaning of keeping or making something whole and well blended" (Emanuelsson, 1998, p. 97). In a pilot study used to

inform this dissertation work, an interview with the Executive Director at the National Council on Disability provided insights into ideas behind United States policy (Robinson, 2014). The director stated that the challenge of inclusion is to not have inclusion at the detriment of the child with the disability (R. Cokley, personal communication, April 12, 2014). When children are included at all costs, something is lost in the ability to meet their needs in an effective manner (Emanuelsson, 1998). With regards to disability, integration has little to do with what should be done with or for any so-called “deviant” person. “Instead, integration directs us toward what has to be done in order to make normally existing differences between individuals accepted as normal” (Emanuelsson, 1998, p. 98). Inclusion and integration do not always happen in positive experiences for the child. Including a student in the regular classroom is different from integrating them into the classroom (Emanuelsson, 1998). The latter does not have to happen for the former to exist. These reasons support the continued non-mainstreamed approaches to teaching students with disabilities. Isolation does not only apply to the self-contained classroom; it can apply to the student with special needs within the regular classroom. “Reasons for continued isolation in ‘integrated’ settings are often expressed in terms of certain kinds of ‘handicaps’ or in certain severity of the ‘handicap’ – both characteristics of the one who is diagnosed as having ‘special needs.’ S/he is thought of as being the problem” (Emanuelsson, 1998, p. 99).

This social aspect of acceptance and togetherness is a philosophical issue that impacts the success of integration in the inclusion setting. It is important to pay attention to a groups’ dynamic, its method of assigning value to a person's characteristics, and how the group works together to become a whole (Emanuelsson, 1998). Norwich (2008) like

Emanuelsson (1998) recognized that the dynamics of the group is one of acceptance and inclusion in the literal and metaphorical, as a sense of physical and mental belonging (Norwich, 2008). As stated previously it is a social construct that equates what is normal and what is deviant. As the Executive Director for the National Council on Disability eloquently states, “Kids with disabilities need the inclusion and kids without disabilities need the inclusion with their peers with disabilities in the same setting” (R. Cokley, personal communication, April 12, 2014). She is clear in relaying her perceptions, as a person with special needs, that the outcomes of inclusion are mutually beneficial.

Social Efficacy theories on the cognitive effects of deviance and labeling have led to the education of students with special needs in a continual balance and unbalance of self-containment and inclusion. These same social theories guide policy to move from one extreme to the other. Robinson (2014) in the pilot study used to inform this dissertation interviewed Patrick Cokley, a policy advisor for Disability and Employment Policy at the Department of Labor. In this interview, Cokley stated “In the past ten years policy initially said people with disabilities have to be separated from everyone else and then they said ok that’s wrong. Let us swing the needle back the other way, people with disabilities have to be in the same class as everyone else all the time” (P. Cokley, personal communication, April 12, 2014). Deschenes et al. (2001) theorized that this pendulum began with initial testing programs. Testing as a modern technology began the systemization of schooling that led to tracking by ability levels, offering vocational training and gender specific curriculum, and new categories for special populations (Deschenes et al., 2001).

Of course, as with Deschenes et al. (2001), other theorists claim that failure is the result. "There is less thought given to who is failing, why they are failing, and what schools can do about this failure than there is to political strategy and accountability for accountability's sake" (Deschenes et al., 2001, p. 540). In Deschenes et al. (2001) study of Covello's community-centered school in East Harlem, the negative effect of failing the deviant child is demonstrated. Imparting the idea of failure to children at any age can cause harmful consequences, even when they are done because of the betterment of the whole. Forcing children out who are academic failures or behavioral problems, does nothing to help alleviate the effects on society and the individual. "In fact, it does irreparable harm to the student and merely shifts the responsibility from the school to a society which is ill-equipped to handle the problem, the solution must be found within the school itself and the stigma of failure must be placed in a boy as seldom as possible" (Dechenes et al., 2001, p. 544).

Norwich (2008) takes this dilemma of removing the child with severe disabilities or child with behavioral issues from the inclusive setting and attributes its mistreatment to the inability to create solutions for issues in transferring ideals to practice. Norwich (2010) reflects international trends towards greater inclusion by examining the placement dilemma of students with severe disabilities that assumes many children with mild to moderate disabilities/SEN are more likely to be in general or inclusive settings. Norwich (2010) concluded that "though there may be uncertainty about whether some areas and degrees of disability/SEN would be called 'severe,' teachers have expressed negative attitudes to including some broad areas, such as severe/profound intellectual disability and significant behavior (or conduct) difficulties" (p. 288). These findings set the stage to

include only what are manageable in the school system and remove what is too severe to control in the open school setting.

Emanuelsson (1998) works on the theory that togetherness with a group will serve to combat failure for any population of student no matter the severity. He states that integration as an aim involves the challenge to accept more of what normally exists in typical groups and togetherness. He suggests trying to avoid segregation as a challenge to members of groups to take responsibility for all members of the group (Emanuelsson, 1998). "This kind of collective competence in an inclusive education setting is necessary to make this possible" (Emanuelsson, 1998, p. 100). The views of Emanuelsson (1998) mirror the political and cultural awareness of the Danes and the socialistic requirements in egalitarianism, taking care of your own. As noted in Chapter One from Virtue's (2008) work, Denmark's annual income is taxed at fifty percent to support the whole in a system of total equality. Restructuring suggested by Emanuelsson states: "Instead of talking about the 'integrated child', it is more correct to talk about the challenges of initiating and maintaining an 'integrated group'" (Emanuelsson, 1998, p. 101). The meaning of inclusive education requires one to fight the system of segregation to further develop the togetherness of a working unit (1998).

Specific to Denmark, much research has been conducted on the history of diversity and inclusion. As inclusion policy started to dictate the requirements of including all children in the regular classrooms of Denmark, researchers such as Søren Langager (2014), helped to explain the historical journey of inclusion in the Danish school system. In the late 1990's school policies were implemented to increase the demand for academic standards for basic skills needed to succeed in society. With this

new accountability, teachers began to remove students that disrupted learning from the traditional school setting. This exclusionary trend continued through the early 2000s where educators were more inundated with students who caused behavioral problems in the classroom (Langager, 2014). There was a growing trend to usher behaviorally challenging students out the door, attributing their behavior to bad parenting. Then in 2006, there was a rise in students being diagnosed with ADHD, ASD, and Asperger's syndrome that was accompanied with instructions for the inclusion into the regular classroom (Langager, 2014). In the later 2000's teacher perceptions changed from wanting to exclude children with special needs to wanting to include students with diagnoses that came with prescriptive directions for inclusion (Langager, 2014). With education policy dictating the pathways of the perceptions of students with special needs and their education, it is important to follow the ideas of diversity and inclusion through the policies created.

Overview of Special Education Policy

The patterns of special education policy have moved through history mimicking policies from the Civil Rights Movement and social movements, such as the Women's and Anti-War Movements (Jeon & Haider-Markel, 2005). As policies change and develop there are direct impacts to the special needs classroom. In the overview of special education policy, the unpacking of the changes in policy will help to understand the impacts these changes make to disability education and the perspectives of educators involving in the education of students with special needs.

Changes in Policy

Historical cultural trends often manifest themselves as government changes

through growth. The late 1960s and early 1970s brought advocates to special needs education that modeled their policies on those of other social movements, such as the civil rights movement and the women's movement (Jeon & Haider-Markel, 2005). Disability entrepreneurs used the same language and images of social reform with an emphasis on disability contexts (Jeon & Haider-Markel, 2005). The atmosphere of change during this period affected the entire world beyond that in the United States. Denmark's education system was influenced by the 1964 Civil Right Act, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968 that transpired in America. In Europe, specifically Denmark, similar implications were felt because of the 'Sputnik-shock' and America's changes to its education system's identity (Engsig & Johnstone, 2015). This restructuring of the Education System in America led to the 1969 law set in Denmark that required the education of students with disabilities to be as close to home as possible (Hansen, 2012). Due to the parallel education system that served students with disabilities, students with disabilities were no longer required to attend schools away from their families.

Patrick Cokley (2014), a disabilities policy advisor for the United States Department of Labor, urged the unpacking of policies that affect the disabilities education community. He expresses that urgency to monitor disability education due to America's "long history of excluding certain groups from the education process" (P. Cokley, personal communication, April 12, 2014). Denmark and the United States have similar histories of exclusion and movement towards complete inclusion with the same goals of a productive labor force. As in Denmark, policy in the United States follows a similar series of legislation that lead to the ideas of inclusion verses exclusion. "In the

U.S., IDEA assures all students with disabilities the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). FAPE consists of special education and related services to meet the unique needs of a child with disabilities" (IDEA Regulations, 2004, p. 1). FAPE carries with it many policies that control the framework of disabilities education. The purpose of IDEA is to break down some of the barriers and not just create another underclass of individuals with disabilities by making sure they have access to free and appropriate education (R. Cokley, personal communication, April 12, 2014).

The 1990, passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, increased focus on the terms *Individualized Education Program* (IEP) and *Least Restrictive Environment* (LRE). The development of multiple agencies began to advocate for students with special needs. These complex circuits of children from families with the resources to support their children through children in foster care systems without this support were now governed by these policies related to IDEA (R. Cokley, personal communication, April 12, 2014). According to Cokley, the concern with this collection of data is that it cannot be shared. You can have up to 19 different service plans across agencies and none of them are required by law to be able to share information back and forth (R. Cokley, personal communication, April 12, 2014). Court cases such as *Irving Independent School District v. Tatro* (1984) and *Cedar Rapids Community Sch. District v. Garret F.* (1999), initiated legal tests referred to as the "bright-line test" to provide clarification for districts as to what services they are required to make available to students with disabilities (Nagano & Weinberg, 2012). As the issues continue to spiral into the education of all children, new policies and reforms arise to improve the success of the education of children in the United States (Nagano & Weinberg, 2012).

Likewise, in Denmark, the same spiral of cause and effect governs the Special Needs Education System. Pathways of laws that protect the human rights of the individual are present. In Denmark, the inception moves from an established idea of egalitarianism that is witnessed throughout its history. The 1993 Act on the Folkeskole (Consolidation Act on Folkeskolen 1993; Ministry of Education, 1993) reflects important core values stating that the purpose of schooling is enlightenment and participation in a democracy. Policy makers argue that students should be included in regular comprehensive schools rather than being excluded into special tracks or 'streamed' classrooms (Consolidation Act No. 170). This act began a shift in the education system leading to Denmark's participation in the UNESCO World Conference in 1994. The conference's main purpose was to re-affirm the commitment to an 'Education for All' with a result of the 'Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action for Special Needs Education' (Engsid & Johnstone, 2015). Engsid and Johnstone (2015) found that in 1996 Denmark included in the Charter of Luxembourg, that inclusive education is necessary if equal opportunities are to be provided for all students and for all citizens. The Act on the Folkeskolen of 2006 (Consolidation Act No. 170), "describes the purpose of schooling not in terms of education for all and participatory democracy but rather of providing education directed toward creating an excellent and talented workforce" (Moos, 2014, pg. 429). It also brings the responsibility of all special education to the municipalities, removing the barriers present in organizing a central system for inclusive schools. Reform efforts in Denmark required that 96% of all students be included in the regular education system by 2015, resulting in a significant increase in students with special needs (Engsid & Johnstone, 2015).

In April of 2012, a law was passed in the Danish parliament to redefine special education practices (Engsid & Johnstone, 2015). The new law often referred to as The Inclusion law, (Law no. 379 of 04.28.12) represents the first time the term inclusion is an explicit part of the Danish collection of educational laws, "The inclusion law represents the culmination of a long history of the development of special education and the emerging of inclusive education in Denmark" (Engsid & Johnstone, 2015, p. 471). From this series of events, the education system was transformed to a direct reflection of the ideals of equality that are paramount to the Danish mindset and ideas of Janteloven, the unwritten rule to not see one's self as more valuable than another, described in the explanations of historical impacts on special needs education. New laws and initiatives quickly followed, "Beginning with PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act and subsequent Regular Education Initiative (REI) – children with significant disabilities were moved from institutional settings to community education settings. The focus of REI was a philosophy of 'mainstreaming'" (Engsid & Johnstone, 2015, p. 475).

Following policies from the United States to Denmark, we see these similarities in their past and present. United States education trends of accountability-based inclusion and high-stakes testing are evident in the changing of Denmark's assessment system's accountability (Engsid & Johnstone, 2015). As we continue to look into the benefits of comparing these two culture's similarities and differences, it is critical that we look for problems that arise, as Rebecca Cokley (2014) described, as multiple government agencies fight for time in the service of individuals, and in Denmark, as the structure of the municipal school becomes more inclusive of students with special needs, there is

always a need to revise and perfect policy and legislation.

Policy Impacts on the Classroom

The issue is in the nature of humankind, which is to inherently be individuals with individual needs. The addition of summer school, retention, and extra work are not going to solve the problems that arise in the cavernous gap between some students and the failure of the educational institutions ability to serve them (Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001). In the early 1970s, the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) began lobbying for the needs and rights of the disabled (*PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1971). PARC overwhelmed the courts with evidence on the ability of students with disabilities to learn and be educated. “The state withdrew its case and the court enjoined the state from excluding children with disabilities from a public education and required that every child be allowed access to an education” (Spring, 2010, p. 73).

After this event, publicity started an avalanche of lobbying groups for the needs of the disabled, all seeking to change the structure of how to remove isolation and segregation of persons with disabilities. “In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act that guaranteed equal educational opportunity for all children with disabilities” (Spring, 2010, p. 73). As stated in the legislation, “all children with disabilities [should] have available to them...a free appropriate public education which emphasized special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs” (2010, p. 73). This final statement alludes to the understanding of the individuality required to instruct students with “unique needs.” The dilemma is that to teach with individuality the requirement of money, time and self are extreme (American Institute for Research, 2018). It is easier to continue existing

programs that require little expectations from the population of most students and educators (AIR, 2018).

To combat this dilemma the individualized education plan (IEP) was developed to seek individuality for students in assessing and providing for special needs. Teachers, parents, and students work together to develop a document that fits their individuality and provides needed educational support to enhance their learning. The American Institute for Research (2018) in *Fulfilling the Promise of IDEA* provided a general understanding of the writing of IEPs, as written in the original legislation [of IEP], an IEP includes:

- A statement of the present levels of educational performance of such child;
- A statement of annual goals, including short-term instructional objectives;
- A statement of the specific educational services to be provided to such child;
- The extent to which such child will be able to participate in regular educational programs; and
- The projected date for initiation and anticipated duration of such services.

Appropriate objective criteria and evaluation procedures are expected with schedules for determining, on at least an annual basis, whether instructional objectives are being achieved.

Similarly, in Denmark, the Ministry of Education passed guidelines on special educational assistance for infants in 1980 (Ministry of Education, 2006). The Ministry introduced the educational-psychology advisory service (PPR) in each municipality to help provide service for students with special needs. The difference in Denmark is that each municipality is responsible for the students with special needs in its domain offering free choice of schooling to parents (Ministry of Education, 2006). The parent may receive

services for schooling at home, in a mainstream school, or free private independent school. In each situation, parents are supported with funding from the governing municipality to provide for the child (Ministry of Education, 2006).

In both cultures, legislation is a well-utilized tool for protecting the individual needs of citizens. "The key to maintaining individuality is for the student to gain as developmentally appropriate a will to fight for themselves and understand their own needs and demand that they be considered and respected" (R. Cokley, personal communication, April 12, 2014). Students with special needs are becoming more entuned to the self-advocacy necessary to demand individualized instruction and curriculum (Pounds & Cuevas, 2019).

Individuality provides a solution to the theoretical debate of inclusion. Deschenes et. al (2001) explained that failure is a result of the unbending, unforgiving system that sought to automate students in order to produce an industry workforce, therefore the implication of education moving away from the generalizability of programs into the individual needs of a student would consequently move towards success. The mismatch of school to student's needs personifies these issues of generalization and inability to successfully instruct students.

Blanket testing of students with standardized tests sought to create a generalization so that identification of those outside the norm could be better served. "In practice, testing was used not so much to diagnose specific learning problems and to devise appropriate learning strategies (surely valuable uses of the new technology of assessment) as to isolate ne'er-do-wells from the mainstream of the graded school for the normal students" (Deschenes et al., 2001, p. 532). There were students who did not fit into

the standard level of learning, and the pedagogical approach was to remove them to address their needs on an individual basis in a different setting from other students (Deshenes et al., 2001). Programs such as Title I exist to aid in teaching “different” children the skills necessary to succeed in school, but these remedial programs often segregate children and leave them with negative outcomes (2001). The pathway of good intentions was sought out to correct inefficient schooling methods for students with differing needs. The outcome was an introduction of biases and further social issues that warranted progressive reparations (2001).

Innovative Characteristics of Special Education Practice

Grimes and Stumme (2016) emphasized the importance that schools maintain flexibility and support for implementing new practices. Implementing innovative work in the classroom often times requires support in the forms of legal defenses, additional funding, and an ability to allow innovative teachers to break the rules. As we look at the categories in this section; non-traditional classrooms, individualized instruction, and evidence-based practices, it is important to remember the risk involved in a teacher's willingness to innovate and create something new. "It was only by implementing and evaluating alternatives that better practices could be established and perhaps new rules developed in the future" (Grimes & Stumme, 2016, p. 108).

Non-Traditional Classrooms

In working for innovative solutions to issues of practice, educational researchers are finding alternative forms of schooling to improve student learning. Many classrooms are incorporating "flipped classrooms" to address the needs of students. In the flipped classroom, teachers record lectures and instructions that are then uploaded as videos for

students to prepare for the in-school lessons (McCrea, 2014). In the teaching of students with special needs, this use of technology is an approach that serves many purposes. In a study by Baglama, Yikmis, and Demirok (2017), research was performed to gather teachers' perspectives on the benefits of using technology to enhance math instruction for students with special needs. Ideas that connected learner-centered ideologies arose from the findings. Using technology to understand math concepts promoted independence for students with special needs by giving them the skills to complete tasks that they would have previously been unable to complete (Baglama et al., 2017). The study revealed that teachers valued the importance of transferring their craft to a technological format in order to focus on the individual needs of their students and were able to use this technique with success (Baglama et al., 2017). Morgan (2014) studied two science teachers that used flipped classrooms to better serve students. The research found that many benefits arose from this innovative approach to teaching, including, allowing students to work at an appropriate pace, or having more time for individual help on more difficult problems, and relieving parents of the responsibility to teach math that is higher than their ability level (Morgan, 2014).

Other forms of non-traditional teaching are present to enhance the instruction of students with special needs. In Denmark, the use of Pedagogues (*pædagoger* in Danish), a distinct profession with a practical orientation, innovatively reaches students that need to be taught in a unique way (Thingstrup et al., 2018). The role of pedagogues varies depending on the setting, but some characteristics are more typical than others (Thingstrup et al., 2018). Pedagogues are present to focus on everyday life skills and overall wellbeing, especially when working with students with special needs (Thingstrup

et al., 2018). Their primary goal is to inculcate the student into a sense of social participation into society (Thingstrup et al., 2018). Specifically, in the schools chosen for this study in Denmark, Pedagogues play a critical role in the reliability of school attendance, learning, and success on developmental examinations (Thingstrup et al., 2018). Their role as additional support to individualized teaching is most evident in specialized schools for students with extreme special needs. Thingstrup et al. (2018) valued the Pedagogue on their ability to move the single-minded focus on academic performance and learning in school, to ideas of education (in a broader sense), relations, wellbeing, inclusion, personal development, and tolerance. These additional non-core academically related approaches to reaching students with emotional and social difficulties provides a strong support system for disability education. The primary goal of this research study is to learn from these non-traditional environments and interpret teachers' perceptions of their effectiveness in teaching students with special needs. Innovation is often the means to equalizing instruction for all students.

Individualized Instruction

In the traditional school or classroom, students with special needs receive most of their individualized instruction outside of the general classroom (Nilsen, 2017). In the United States, resource classrooms provide a separate portion of the day to address any difficulties encountered during regularly scheduled courses (Nilsen, 2017). This structure is not as explicitly defined in Nordic schools, but the results are similar. In the Nordic system, 80% of students with special needs receive instruction through groups or individual lessons outside of classes (Nilsen, 2017). The other 20% of students with special needs receive their instruction in different formats, such as Denmark's use of

Pedagogues as an extra teacher in the classroom (Nilsen, 2017 and Thingstrup et al., 2018). These methods of organization are limited by the lack of communication between the educators working with each student. The two groups of teachers, those assigned to traditionally educate the students and those intended to reach students on an individual basis, rarely collaborate and work together to achieve the goals of educating the student. They often perform separate roles and plan instruction independent of each other. Thus, dividing the instruction of educating students instead of seeing it as a shared team approach (Thingstrup, et. al, 2018).

This is not the case in all schools, specifically those geared to flexibility and relaxing of the rules. The intention of pedagogues is to enhance instruction and build on individualization (Thingstrup et al., 2018). This type of schooling directly reflects the Learner-Centered Ideology of an Active School that allows experience to guide student growth (Schiro, 2013). Pedagogues give students the benefits of their experiences in creative careers to enhance their ability to experience creativity (Thingstrup et al., 2018). In the United States, pedagogues do not exist, thus the classroom teacher relies on a focus on individual interactions to accomplish these same individualized goals. In research performed by Brown, Ernst, Clark, DeLuca, and Kelly (2018), the buzz word *differentiation* provides the structure for the study. The goal for individualized instruction, where the premise that all students learn in different ways and that each student needs instruction that is individualized to their learning style, is described in the formula of differentiation (Ernst et al., 2018). Schiro (2018) explained that the learner in Learner-Centered Ideologies is the central focus in the world of the educator and will demonstrate success when allowed to naturally grow with individualized instruction.

Evidence-Based Practices

Evidence-Based Practices (EPB) are defined in the Council for Exceptional Children Standards for Evidence-Based Practices in Special Education (2014) as interventions that have their base in science and equally as important is the requirement that practitioners know how to select the best evidence-based practices for their interventions. EPBs are imperative when implementing alternative solutions to social reconstruction, it is important to eliminate from culture aspects that are believed as undesirable and to replace them with social practices and values that are desirable (Schiro, 2013). EBP implementation is used to monitor these social reform efforts and ensure student's exposure to "interventions and practices that have been shown to be effective through research, and which result in overall improved student outcomes" (Russo-Campisi, 2017, pg. 194). Russo-Campisi (2017) discovered that utilizing EBP in the disability classroom required a restructuring of the assumptions made when utilizing research. First, there is a gap between research and practice. Research findings are not always viable in practical situations in the classroom, especially in the disability classroom, flexibility is the key to success (Russo-Campisi, 2017). The demand for individualized instruction is necessary when teaching special needs education (Nilsen, 2017). Teachers must continually monitor and adjust to the dynamics of the classroom and fixed rules will not always apply (2017).

Related Research

The related research pertinent to understanding teachers' perceptions of special needs education works from theory to practice. Social efficacy theory via Learner-Centered Ideologies, lends to the relationship of idea to practice in social action, while

relative global comparisons of perceptions and studies provide a guide for the purposes of practical application of ideas.

Learner-Centered Ideology Theories

Krista Kaput (2018) in her work, *Evidence for Student-Centered Learning*, directly supported the benefits of Learner-Centered Ideology Theory within the Special Needs Education community. Kaput (2018) defined “Student-Centered Learning” as a system of schooling that takes into account students’ interests, learning styles, cultural identities, life experiences, and personal challenges, “instead of maintaining the current, adult-centered, hierarchical structure where students are the receivers of a predetermined set of knowledge” (p. 7.) A design is described that sets students up for success by maintaining equity and meeting students’ unique needs (2018). These described ideas of equity and uniqueness work in tandem with the ideologies in LCI explained by Frances Parker (1894/1964): “The center of all movement in education is the child” (as cited in Schiro, 2013).

Social Efficacy Theories

As described earlier, Bandura (1977) believed that efficacy was a natural formulation of social relational and social cognitive theories controlling the way persons feel and respond to the world. In the same guise as Bandura (1977), Mulholand and Cumming (2016) provide comparative research that causally relates to the present studies understanding of LCI and teacher efficacy as it relates to knowledge and attitudes with regard to students with disabilities. The qualitative study searching for meaning examined the theoretical framework of attitude developed by Van Aalderen-Smeets, Walma van der Molen, and Asma (2012) can be applied to research with students with special needs and

the perceptions of teachers in the disabilities field. The study utilizes the argument that this method of theorizing works best to determine teacher attitudes in future research. Through the categorizing of social efficiency models of cognitive beliefs through perception, affective states through enjoyment and anxiety, and perceived control through self-efficacy and context dependency, the results demonstrated that future studies have the potential to gain more comprehensive results from teachers' perceptions (2016). While this study simplified the theories presented to just those of social efficacy via LCI, the benefits of seeing social efficacy laid out in a more comprehensive manner helped to understand its potential as a framework.

Social Action Research

It is important to discuss studies performed by Norwich (2010). Although this data was performed over ten years ago, it serves to build a foundation for the changing thought processes towards disabilities inclusion discourse in the United States and Denmark. Norwich (2010) demonstrated social action by reporting findings about placement questions relevant to disability in education and the dilemmas of difference. The study was part of a larger international study with 132 subjects who practiced education in England, the USA, and The Netherlands. Norwich (2010) used interviews aimed at gaining perspectives on the consequences of having inclusive/separate placements for children with more severe disabilities/special educational needs. The study used a mixed-methods approach with quantitative data defining degrees of recognition and resolution of dilemma and qualitative data defining reasons, justifications, and suggested resolutions. The narrowing of choices for the interview process using a semi-structured interview method and a pre-written form used to gather

quantitative data provided a guide to the current study including the methods for interviewing participants about their perspectives and judgments about the presented placement dilemma with special needs. Newer studies have continued this investigation building from the research that was started at an important historical time for growth in disabilities policy and development, especially in Denmark.

In the United States, more current research performed by Andrews and Brown (2015) sought to examine special education teachers' ideal perception of teaching compared to their current experiences. The researchers used a causal comparative study of the Perceptions of Success Inventory for Beginning Teachers to examine 14 participants who taught special education students in the southeastern United States. Results demonstrated that teachers' experiences rated much lower than they perceived their experiences would be before teaching. The social action implicated in this research study extends to the benefits for administration of retaining educators who work with special needs populations. The same basis for studying Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theories guided the study into a self-reflection utilized in the social efficacy of acting on the perceptions of educator's in the field. These relative experiences from the United States and Denmark model the same agendas of social action exhibited in the current study's look at the perceptions of teachers as it relates to their motivations for teaching students with special needs.

Related Global Studies

Rob Webster (2016) utilized the European Union, specifically Great Britain's plethora of data to benefit collection for a quantitative longitudinal study of the classroom experiences of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream primary schools. The

study focused on gathering data from a systematic observation of observed behaviors from teachers and their pupils over a period of 35 years focusing on students with special education needs. The results of the analysis of this systematic observation dataset are used as the basis for identifying similarities and differences in how all pupils have experienced the primary classroom over time. The research study limited its results to only what the data revealed resulting in a suggested variation of the proportion of time pupils spent interacting with teachers, teaching assistants, peers, and working alone. The results demonstrated the same variation when looking at the tendencies for these interactions over time and relative to pupils with or without special education needs. The implications for this study pertain to the varied nature of the conclusions. The research suggests that educational reforms and applications vary with results when applied. In 35-years the search for an observable growth in the effects that teacher interactions have on students with special needs inclusion to the classroom are inconclusive. The review of this literature has an advantage due to the qualitative approach to understanding the individual and not the qualitative view of the whole without individual parameters and influences.

Summary

The pathway of philosophies from theory to practice, dissects the complex issues that surround perceptions of special needs education. The more we understand the historical framework surrounding policy and legislation concerning disabilities movements the greater our understanding of students' needs. Following the innovative characteristics of Special Needs Education including trends in traditional versus non-traditional teaching strategies, whole group versus individualized approaches, and

evidence-based practices guide the findings of the present study presented in this work. Teachers' perspectives are formed and rely on the information gathered from their life journeys through history, educational frameworks, and political agendas. The following research methodology in Chapter Three will aim to gather more information to add to the debate on these issues as it pertains to teachers' perspectives in the field.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methods used in this research study, including the subjects of the study, the instruments used, the procedures for gathering data, and the system used to interpret the data. A qualitative comparative case study was used to examine teachers' perceptions from the United States and Denmark related to special needs education. The research questions which framed the comparative study include;

1. What motivates teachers in the United States and Denmark to work with students who have special needs?
2. How do teachers in the United States and Denmark perceive inclusion, individualized instruction, and nontraditional instruction?
3. How are teachers in the United States and Denmark influenced by Learner-Centered Ideologies?

Research Design

Merriam (2009) defined the nature of qualitative researchers as, “interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). The research questions embody this explanation. Studying the perceptions of teachers uncovers the nature of interpreting experiences and meaning. Since the presented study is a comparative case study of the perceptions of teachers from the United States and Denmark on special needs, a qualitative research approach is preferred.

Choosing a qualitative approach was determined after extensive research of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. In accordance with Maxwell (2013), qualitative methods were selected due to the necessity of in-depth, individualized discoveries of the phenomenological patterns present in studying human perceptions. There are specific goals that qualitative research can help the researcher achieve (Maxwell, 2013). Unlike quantitative research that sees the world as variables, qualitative research sees the world as a process (Maxwell, 2013). "Process theory, in contrast, tends to see the world in terms of people, situations, events, and the processes that connect these; explanation is based on an analysis of how some situations and events influence others" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 29).

Merriam (2009) provided a thorough description of the philosophical foundations underlying diverse types of qualitative research. "Qualitative inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data" (2009, p. 2). Merriam (2009) suggested that all qualitative research share a basic structure and set of criteria, but more detailed specifications emerge when exploring individual subtypes. The required criteria for all researchers conducting a qualitative study would be (a) how people interpret their experiences, (b) how they construct their worlds, and (c) what meaning they attribute to their experiences (2009).

Comparative Case Study

A comparative case study involves collecting and analyzing data from several cases that share common characteristics. According to Merriam (2009), collections of cases are bound together by categories grouped together by groups of subjects and like

phenomena. Specific goals that are necessary when comparing case studies, include understanding; the meaning behind events and experiences where the participants are engaged, the context and influences of the context of their actions, the process involved in events taking place, the ability to fluctuate amongst unanticipated phenomena and influences, and the development of causal explanations (2009). Rash decisions for reform and change, without the consideration of qualitative factors, are a risk when basing comparisons solely on quantitative measures (Donnelley, 2014).

The development of causal explanations grounds the rationale for using qualitative case study as the format for this research (2009). The goals of shared anecdotal data derived from varying cultures inherently includes a causal relationship to the perceptions of all shareholders (2014). Their past, their systems, and their teaching characteristics all influence the findings of beneficial discourse (2005).

The nature of the study is based on applying many means to thoroughly explore “a case” in as many paths as possible. As Merriam (2009) described, “Case research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case” (p. 40). This approach to studying phenomenon is expressively qualitative, but Merriam (2009) concluded that this an assumption often being the case, but not always. Even though all areas of qualitative methodology contain some sort of phenomenon, there are characteristics that warrant categorizing. The experiences educators have from childhood, their education and their practice influence their “everyday life and social action.” Advocacy for marginalized populations are usually activated by some relational experience or need that connects one to the issues or a phenomenon. In Rune Sarromaa Hausstätter’s (2007) study on students’ reasons for studying special needs education, “four of the twelve participants [identified]

as helpers and they all had in common previous personal experience with the field of special needs in a variety of ways — as teachers in classes with pupils who needed extra help, as pupils themselves who have had learning difficulties or as social workers” (p. 51). Hausstätter (2007) discovered in his research that perceptions of teachers often are fueled by their own subjective experiences throughout childhood and beyond.

Context of the Study

This research study was conducted in three schools, namely, two Danish schools and one American school. The first Danish school was specifically set up to address the needs of students that would either harm others or themselves, making it impossible for them to be included in the traditional classroom setting. The goal of the school is to reach children using non-traditional formats in an attempt to provide valid learning experiences and ensure successful integration into society as adults. As of 2019 data, the school is comprised of 60 students in kindergarten through high school with around 30 in the high school grades combined. The teacher student ratio at the time of the study was 1 to 4, allowing for many opportunities with one-on-one attention and supervision.

Educators were hired because of their expertise in education and the creative arts. Degrees in Special Needs Education were not the standard for hiring practices. The school utilized pedagogues, who were "traditionally working outside school and representing a creative and social approach to learning and wellbeing" (Thingstrup et al., 2017, p. 354). After the initial questionnaire data was collected, the school changed its structure. The interviews were completed after students were reintroduced to inclusion in traditional school classrooms. The second and third schools consisted of another public

education traditional school in the same municipality in Denmark and one in the United States.

In this traditional Danish school, students progress in grade levels, where all students remain with a single teacher for most of their instruction. The school's primary goal was to prepare students for Gymnasium, the education level beyond primary school. In Denmark, education is compulsory between the ages of six and sixteen consisting of ten years of primary and lower secondary education (Chrysalis Schools, 2017). The levels include one pre-school year, years 1 – 9 with an optional year 10, and then to Gymnasium (Chrysalis Schools, 2017). The school was comprised of 1200 students in middle through high school with around 25 students diagnosed as students with special needs. The teacher student ratio was 1 to 20, allowing for many opportunities with one-on-one attention and supervision.

To make a comparison to these findings a third site was chosen in Atlanta, Georgia. The school chosen was a private school specializing in language needs for students in grades K-12, developed by educational researchers, who continue to perform and implement research (The Howard School, 2019). The goal of the school was to produce growth in learning for students with language learning difficulties, and to build self-advocacy in students with special needs (The Howard School, 2019). The school was comprised of 170 students in elementary through high school with around 100% of the students diagnosed as students with special language needs. The teacher student ratio was 1 to 2, allowing for most opportunities with one-on-one attention, supervision, and individualized instruction.

Table 3.1 Specifications of Site Demographics

	SPECIFICATIONS OF SITE DEMOGRAPHICS		
Characteristic	Specialized Danish School	Traditional Danish School	Specialized US School
# of students	60	1200	170
% of Special Education students	100%	10%	100%
% of Exclusion programs within the school	0%	0%	0%
Teacher to Student Ratio	1/4	1/20	1/2
Number of Teachers with a Special Education Degree	0	0	0
Percentage of Creatively Trained Teachers (Creative Arts, Pedagogues)	75%	50%	75%
Type of school	Public	Public	Private

Ethical Protection and Trustworthiness

Working with data that represents a small section of the field of study has its limitations. The risk of undue influence from the researcher plays a role with an educator's personal experience and positionality. Other influences from personal relationships could also influence the results. The researcher's dual role as researcher and educator who has taught for 23 years in inclusion settings directly connects pre-ideas to the mode of questions and interpretation of the findings. To combat the impact of these

limitations, the researcher used coding and rechecking of data against participant reflections. All participants are referred to with pseudonyms and no aspects of accountability are imposed on the participants in the study. Letters of consent were distributed and signed from each of the participants explaining the studies requirements and limitations (see Appendix A).

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research requires the researcher to delve into the environment of the phenomenon taking place in order to tell its story (Merriam, 2009). To give a complete narrative of the perspectives of teachers who work with students with special needs in the United States and Denmark an emersion into the location of the schools through their vision and missions, setting and place, and thoughts and experiences is necessary. The researcher first explored the vision of the schools through documents, websites, and personal contacts. As part of a pilot study (Robinson, 2018), a journey to the specific locations as an observer of the physical space, interactions with learning from the students' perspectives and the teachers' perspectives, combined with participating in experiential learning outside of the schools' location were all used to gain an overall perspective of the context of the phenomenon. For the current study, document collection, questionnaire feedback, and interviews were completed, utilizing the critical background knowledge obtained from the pilot study (Robinson, 2018) to understanding teacher perspectives of special needs education.

Participant Selection

Similar populations of educators were chosen to balance the comparison from the three institutions, including, 1 classroom teacher and 2 fine arts teachers. Teachers in this

school arrived as experts in their craft and not traditional special education degree programs. All of their specialized training was as a result of professional development on methods and brain research. As with the Danish schools, connections through the researcher's personal interactions allowed for opportunities to successfully disseminate the research questions to interview subjects. Representatives from the American school provided staff development opportunities in my present teaching assignment. With their assistance, I was connected to the educators chosen for comparative participation. The school's demographics are similar to those of the municipality in Copenhagen with 170 students in grades K-12, who all have some form of special need. The ratio of teacher to student is 1 to 2, providing the same one-on-one attention as seen in Denmark.

The selection of participants for the interviews follows two sampling techniques. First, one of the sites in Denmark and the site in the United States were chosen because of their similarities in disabilities population as well as a similar schooling framework. All students in these two schools have been diagnosed with some form of disability. The second site in Denmark was chosen because of the absence of exclusionary practices for students with special needs, similar to the other selections in Denmark and the United States. "This method follows a homogeneous sampling, which selects all similar cases in order to describe some subgroup in depth" (Glesne, 2011, p. 45). Second, sites were chosen because of their disparate cultures and political frameworks, the United States as "American" and Denmark as, "Danes." Glesne (2011) states, "This method follows a maximum variation sampling, which selects cases that cut across some range of variation" (p. 45). Again, within this context was not seeking to claim generalizability.

As previously stated, the small sampling of participants in this study only aims to provide suggested answers to questions framed in general terms (Maxwell, 2013).

The sample size was limited to six teachers; in Denmark, participants consisted of two classroom teachers from a traditional education setting and one classroom teacher from a special needs setting, and the school in the United States; one teacher from the general classroom setting and two teachers who specialize in arts based classrooms. Teachers in each school were selected to gain an overall look at the functioning of schools for the education of students with special needs. Joseph Maxwell (2013) suggested that this type of sampling is called purposeful selection. Small samplings of teachers within a single school in these specific areas will provide a purposeful selection as well as a diverse range of information.

As stated, total of 6 participants were presented in the study. To balance the creative arts teachers to regular classroom teachers, the United States participants were from different classroom settings. While the Denmark selections were combined traditional classroom and arts education instructors. The school in the United States was a private school that was not mandated by the federal standards of disability education, while the Danish school was mandated by the policies administered by their municipality. A brief profile of each study participant is provided below using pseudonyms.

Mrs. Andersen Mrs. Andersen has been teaching at her Danish school for 6 years. She teaches Danish, English, and Religion to 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. She came into teaching after 14 years of staying home with her children, and just a year before the policies on Disability Education changed to complete inclusion. She teaches at the same school as Mr. Lerstang and is a neighbor of Mrs. Denton. Her English skills were the

most limited and relied on Mrs. Denton for her understanding of questions and ability to give complete information rich answers. Her experiences in Disability Education are completely from the perspective of inclusion with little preparation during her teacher education degree.

Mrs. Denton Mrs. Denton is a white female American living in Denmark. Her expatriate status brings a dual perspective on the discourse between the United States and Denmark. Her teaching career did not begin until she moved to Denmark in 2010. Her skills as an English speaker with a bachelor's degree in English and personal connection as a sibling of a student with special needs encouraged her entrance into the special needs' classroom. In this capacity, she is able to blend creative teaching methods to combine Pedagogue philosophy with preparation for Danish secondary levels testing. Her current teaching has moved to a strictly health related focus.

Mr. Edgerton Mr. Edgerton has been teaching at his current school in the United States for 10 years. He entered the field of teaching through the creative arts as an expert in his field. He received his visual arts training from multiple conservatory arts schools and special needs teacher training from in house and conferences. Mr. Edgerton was drawn to instructing students with special needs by watching his parent work in this field.

Mrs. Ingles Mrs. Ingles is a white female in her early thirties. She teaches music in the American school, that specializes in children with special needs. Her training is from a music conservatory, where she has mastered her field. She does not come to teaching with any teacher training or special education training. Mrs. Ingles has had a successful career as a musician and enters the field of education as a creative art teacher.

Mr. Jones Mr. Jones is currently in his ninth year of teaching in America. He began his career as a support teacher and has continued in the Social Studies curriculum with three years of experience at his current learning disability specialized school. All of his students are students with attention or learning disabilities. His training for teaching students with special needs came from course work during his degree program in Social Studies Education and staff development on brain-based research.

Mr. Lerstang Mr. Lerstang is an ethnic middle-aged male. He teaches language in a traditional Danish school, specializing in Danish, English, and German. His additional music training allows for music integration into the regular classroom as well as an extracurricular instruction of music after school.

Data Collection

In this research study, data was collected through three methods of gathering information; document analysis, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. The triangulation of information was necessary to support the findings and conclusions made in the research.

Document Analysis

One form of data collection utilized in this study was document analysis. Before administering questionnaires and interviews, information was gathered from historical documents on special needs policy and curriculum. In addition, current documents in the way of government and school's websites helped to build on information through contemporary publishing methods (See Appendix B). In Appendix G the original observation field notes from the pilot study (Robinson, 2017) are provided for added context.

According to Glesne (2011), documents can help to shape the direction for interviews and understanding of phenomenon using of historical material and current documents and artifacts. Below is a list of the documents gathered for each site involved in this study. Examples of each are provided in Appendix B.

Table 3.2 Documents Gathered and Interpreted

Location	Document	Purpose
United States	School Website	Mission and Goals Historical Information Biographical Information Curriculum Organization
United States	Government Websites	Special Needs Policy
Denmark	School Websites	Mission and Goals Historical Information Biographical Information Curriculum Organization
Denmark	Government Websites	History of Special Needs Progression of Grade Levels Special Needs Policy

Examples of these websites can be found in Appendix B (The Howard School, 2019; IDEA Individuals with Disabilities Act, 2019; Chrysalis Schools, 2017; Kildegaardskolen, 2019 & European Agency, 2019).

Pre-interview Questionnaire

Before the first recorded interviews, participants were sent pre-interview questionnaires with specified questions relating to demographics, learner-centered ideologies, and graduation rates. The following is a list of questions on the google form. A secondary purpose of these questionnaires was to ease the non-English speakers into the purpose and design of the research study.

1. What is your area of expertise? (What is your job title?)
2. What type of students do you regularly impact in your field?
3. What type of training did you have for special education?
4. What in your life drew you to work with special need students?
5. Is there anything in your upbringing that makes you connect to students with disabilities?
6. How do you personally perceive children with disabilities?
7. How do you feel about individuality as it contrasts meeting the needs of all?
8. What are your perceptions of labels?
9. What do you think would happen if we removed labels?
10. If you were labeled as a child, how did this affect your schooling experiences?
11. Do you teach your students with special needs for longer than one year?
12. Tell a story that demonstrates your use of individualized instruction with a student or students.
13. Tell a story where you utilized non-traditional teaching methods with student, ie. technology, outdoor classrooms, field study, etc..

14. Do you have access to knowledge of their learning beyond your classroom?
Either by other teachers during the current school year or as they progress to the next level.
15. Do you have any evidence of the long-term effects of approaching teaching in a non-traditional manner?
16. What percentage of your students with special needs continue in an inclusive environment when promoted to the next grade?
17. What percentage of your students with special needs continue their education past high school (gymnasium)?
18. Did these two percentages increase or decrease after the 2018-2019 school year? By how much?
19. Do you have access to any data with graduation rates for students with special needs? If not do you have a contact who can access that information?
20. What do you think would help students in inclusive settings maintain successful progress toward graduation?
21. Do you have any other ideas that would be beneficial for helping students prosper in inclusive classrooms?
22. Do you have any other comments that would be beneficial to understanding Learner-Centered Ideologies in your school setting?

Semi-Structured Interviews

The selection of interviewing as the primary means of data collection follows suggestions from multiple sources. To emulate the essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience, the comparative case study interview is the primary

method of data collection (Merriam, 2009). After the data from the pre-questionnaires was analyzed, the recorded interviews were conducted through video chat. The interviews began with a general conversation to set the stage for a relaxed non-intrusive atmosphere. The following interview protocol began with initial questions that aimed at gaining a broad analysis of perceptions, such as, “What drew you to working in the special needs field?” and “What training did you receive to certify you to teach or advocate for these students?” A series of questions that uncovered perceptions on a narrower scale was given, such as; “How do you change your teaching to adjust to your students?”, “How is that different in the exclusion classroom from the inclusion classroom?”, and “How did your disability prepare you to be instrumental in teaching students with special needs?” Anecdotes and storytelling were encouraged by asking participants to give examples of events and situations. Follow up questions may or may not have been given contingent upon depth of answers. Each interview encompassed thirty to forty-five minutes. Permission was solicited to record sessions for accuracy in coding and ease of conversational approach to interviewing.

As the researcher, I chose a semi-structured interview to gather information from educators in the United States and Denmark on their perceptions of and practices with special needs. According to Roulston (2010) in these kinds of interviews, interviewers refer to a prepared interview guide that includes open-ended questions. After questions were presented the role of the interviewer was to seek further detail through descriptive language in the format of stories and anecdotes. Working with participants in English when it is not the primary language, requires careful expansion of questions to monitor understanding.

Once interviews were finalized, a brief period was used to code the transcripts, name similarities, search for outliers, and look for further questions to clarify data. This information was used to create new questions that are participant specific, and a second short interview was conducted. This was only implemented if necessary, to clarify findings. The coding process was reestablished with the new documents and findings organized based on the data.

Research Procedure

The researcher used Skype to continue to build rapport with pilot study subjects from the Danish schools, while face to face and telephone conversations were used with the pilot study subjects in the United States (Robinson, 2018). These conversations included development of the research questions and plans for distributing the questionnaires and conducting the semi-structured interviews. The current study utilized these relationships to gather data on learner-centered ideologies and current graduation rates.

In order to pre-check the validity and reliability of the questionnaires, a pre-questionnaire was created to distribute to administrators of each program. Feedback from these pre-questionnaires was used to revamp the questionnaires to increase ease of readability and success of attaining rich responses. These updated questionnaires were sent out to the subjects using Google Forms. The interviews from the subjects in the United States were arranged by one of the administrators from the United States, resulting in face to face audio recorded interviews. The interviews from the Danish subjects were all performed on Skype. Once the data was compiled from each interview further interviews were conducted over the phone to fill in any gaps of information that

would lessen the comparative nature of the study. Below is an explanation of the stages performed to complete the study.

The study consisted of four stages:

Stage I consisted of reestablishing personal contacts with subjects through email, skype, and telephone.

Stage II consisted of administering questionnaires focused on demographics, learner-centered ideologies, and graduation rates.

Stage III dealt with performing face to face interviews through Skype video with all of the subjects to expand on answers in the questionnaire.

Stage IV consisted of the coding, analyzing and interpreting of the data gathered using themes and patterns.

Data Analysis

In Vivo Coding was used to first analyze data to dissect the information gained from document analysis and the semi-structured interviews. Saldaña (2013) described In Vivo Coding as coding the live language of a unique subculture. In this study teachers' language is specific to the environment where they live, in this case their work with students with special needs. Initial coding identified words and phrases that range from the descriptive, conceptual, and theoretical (Saldaña, 2013). Pattern Coding was then used as a second coding method to look for data patterns that holistically represent the data (Saldaña, 2013). Throughout the data analysis, reasoning was used in an inductive thinking format to perform qualitative data analysis. "Inductive analysis is based on the assumption that inferences can be developed by examining empirical data for patterns. Thus, by closely examining qualitative data in the form of [interview transcripts and

published documents], the researcher locates patterns and commonalities that contribute to the generation of theory" (Roulston, 2010, p. 150). Using this examination process, data was organized and reduced through applying codes to define conceptual categories that lead to thematic representations. In the research analysis, a mixture of codes was derived directly from "words and phrases uttered by the participants," as described in In Vivo Coding (2010, p. 151). Thematic representations were gathered from participants' perspectives concerning the benefits or limitations of phenomenon in special needs education, there was an orientation derived from the structure of the interview questions. A focus on the representation of data that may have been used to decipher and evaluate questions to determine what systems were not working and the participants perceptions of what solutions might work better (Roulston, 2010). In the pursuit for comparative sharing, the representation of 'what is working' in each system is equally as important (Roulston, 2010).



Figure 3.1 Summary of Data Collection

Summary

The research methodology in Chapter Three aims to gather more information to add to the debate on these issues as it pertains to teachers' perspectives in the field (see Figure 3.1). The use of gathering a purposeful selection of educators who instruct students with special needs lends to the rich discussion in the next chapter. Inclusion of classically trained, non-classically trained, creative teaching, traditional classroom teaching, firsthand experiences with disabilities, and no previous connections to disabilities reaches the qualitative methodologies of a case study that tells the story of meaning behind phenomenological events.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter 4 presents the analysis of data collected using the qualitative research methodologies detailed in Chapter 3. These methodologies included recruiting three classroom and creative arts teachers from each country as study participants to administer semi-structured interviews in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What motivates teachers in the United States and Denmark to work with students who have special needs?
2. How do teachers in the United States and Denmark perceive inclusion, individualized instruction, and nontraditional instruction?
3. How are teachers in the United States and Denmark influenced by Learner-Centered Ideologies?

This research study was guided by the theoretical constructs influenced by the ideas of Learner-Centered Ideology from John Dewey's Lab School. The perceptions of teachers as they work within an LCI *Activity School* mindset influence their ability to promote change in a positive social construct. This active social reform is generated in special needs education based on the perceptions of all involved from their culture, politics, family structure, and personal experiences (Mulholland & Cummings, 2016). “Results of such an investigation have the potential to impact the field by positively influencing professional learning, changes in teacher classroom behavior, and the

improvement of educational outcomes and school experiences of students with disabilities” (2016, p. 97).

Summary of Data Collection Strategy

The process of recruiting study participants involved working with three sites, two in Denmark and the other one in the United States. In Denmark, the researcher worked with a collection of three teachers from the same municipality, two from a traditional public school and one from a specialized public school. In the United States, the researcher worked with three teachers from Georgia who matched the teaching placements to those in the Denmark selections. The resulting participants included 6 classroom teachers with experiences in core and creative arts teaching of students with special needs.

The data collection process began with document analysis of school websites and governmental websites. Then moved to structured collections over a four-week period of demographics, written descriptions of teaching practices, and one-on-one interviewing through digital communication. Multiple formats of gathered data were used to enable the researcher to answer the stated research questions. The methods and instruments used were digital collections from internet documents in each country, questionnaires based with general interview questions presented on Google Forms, and one-on-one interviews on Skype. Follow up data was collected using phone communication, emails, physical one-on-one, and skype communication. The researcher maintained an electronic journal of all activities and observations throughout the data collection process.

General Findings and Data Analysis

Document Analysis

Documents were gathered from government websites and school websites to provide a platform of each school's government policy and institutional mission requirements for teaching students with special needs. These documents provided background information that supported the Learner-Centered Ideologies within the chosen schools represented in the study. Specifically, the published vision and mission statements from the American School and Danish Schooling System are important to the grounding of LCI in the research study (See Appendix B.) In the American school, the mission statement speaks to the importance of working with students' individual needs thus helping students to self-analyze and self-advocate (Howard School, 2019). This goal is directly aligned to the goal of LCI to construct learning environments that foster growth in students as they build meaning for themselves through learning and knowledge (Schiro, 2013). The learner-centered mindset is embodied in, "The curriculum focuses on depth of understanding to make learning meaningful and therefore, maximize educational success" as read in the American's school's published mission statement (2019). There is also a detailed list of beliefs that securely ground the American school in LCI through its knowledge of special needs research and practices. Further pages on the website discuss LCI Activity School criteria embedded into instruction through the arts, exercise and movement blended throughout the student's school and home life, and field experiences outside of the school environment.

Table 4.1 LCI at the American School.

Beliefs Guiding the Desired Results for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dignity, common decency, and respect are the cornerstones of a rich, healthy living and learning environment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligence can be nurtured and developed: it is not fixed or immutable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding one's process of learning is as important as the knowledge itself.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learn best when they have intimate knowledge of their own learning profile.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' intrinsic motivation to learn is realized when they are encouraged to question, explore, and take risks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children acquire knowledge and express their understanding of that knowledge in many ways.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep and enduring understanding occurs when students construct meaning in their own minds and apply knowledge in new ways and across diverse and novel contexts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is a collaborative endeavor built upon trust, respect, and communication among student, family, school, and community.

(Howard School, 2019)

In the Danish specialized school, the mission statement includes instruction that works with students' combined needs of education and medical treatment for their special need (Chrysalis Schools, 2016). The learner-centered mindset is embodied in this parent satisfaction statement, "The way my child is acknowledged and understood is fantastic. There is always a high level of professional focus, which enables everything that supports

my child” (2016). Further pages on the website demonstrate video footage of LCI Activity School criteria in instruction through the arts, activities in school, and field trips throughout the community outside of the school environment.

Table 4.2 LCI at the Danish Specialized School.

Beliefs Guiding the Desired Results for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We combine education and treatment!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our learning environments include special needs schools, STU, (adult) Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program (PRP) and language classes where we teach Danish as a second language acquisition.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are experts in educating and treating children and adolescents with complex mental challenges and believe that all children and adolescents should have the opportunity to acquire a valuable and self-sufficient adult life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our work begins with the transparent philosophy: We never give up! We believe that all our students have great potential for development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our goal is to reach as many children and adolescents as possible while simultaneously keeping a strong focus on the students and their local communities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our locations contain various opportunities and resources that can benefit the individual needs of the students. Schools and activity centers in the city are all close to public transportation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We enjoy the city’s multiple opportunities for cultural and social experiences and take advantage of and learn from all the challenges a big city can produce.

- Treatment facilities in rural areas provides a respite of peace, space and fresh air for the children and adolescent students who particularly benefits from it.

(Chrysalis Schools, 2016)

Table 4.3 LCI at the Danish Government School

Beliefs Guiding the Desired Results for Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values that make the school a good place to learn and a good place to be. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We create communities where children develop professionally, socially and personally. <input type="checkbox"/> We emphasize learning environments that challenge the individual and provide space for everyone. <input type="checkbox"/> We focus on the need for children to engage in a constantly changing democratic society.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued development of Immersion / USU within the school curriculum.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing differentiated teaching strategies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing strong communities with concern for well-being, knowledge, and friendship.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen Professional Learning Communities (PLF).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey towards turning the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into the "new constitution" on which the entire school's everyday life is based.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the students about their rights and has involved them in the work to improve the well-being of the school.

- We focus on children's rights in Denmark and abroad. Students are working on students' knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and children's conditions in other parts of the world.

(Kildegaardskolen, 2019)

Google Form Questionnaire

The Google Form Questionnaires (see Appendix C) were administered in advance of the interviews to gather demographic data, but to also begin the dialogue with the participants. In Appendix D the questions are presented with each participant's responses.

The second series of questions on the questionnaire sought to gain a deeper understanding of Learner-Centered Ideologies as they were perceived by the participants in the study. The table provided in Appendix D gives a comparison of American participants to the Danish participants for each response.

Semi-structured Interviews

In the semi-structured interviews, the information collected in the questionnaires (See Appendix C) were expanded (See Appendix E). Participants gave anecdotal evidence from their lives and teaching practice that supported their ideas and perceptions. In the United States, this led to very descriptive stories about specific accommodation activities and specific students with special needs. Participants clarified any preliminary information about their backgrounds in special needs education, giving a clear pathway that brought them to the school where they currently teach. In Denmark, this expansion was used to clarify information due to the language barrier. Much of the time was spent talking about the changes in policy that led to the inclusion of all special needs populations into the regular school system. Through the use of anecdotal evidence on

students with diagnosed special needs and some not diagnosed, provided a clearer picture of special needs in Denmark. Selections from the interview transcripts have been provided in Appendix E to give a full picture of this data collection method.

Data Analysis

Through these data collection methods and their ensuing analysis by the processes of in vivo coding and categorizing with the NVivo 12 computer application, the data was coded to identify substantive spoken phrases with similar contextual and emotional content. These phrases were then identified as larger ideas that denoted similarities and differences in the teaching ideas and practices of the participants. As a result of the coding, the larger ideas were organized into seven predominant patterns that include; innovative teaching practices, cognitive thinking and efficacy, learning differences, indicative practices, training, motivations, and future implications. Four major themes emerged from these patterns: (1) Influence of Deviance; (2) Finding Balance: Inclusion verses Exclusion; (3) Teaching Personal Advocacy; and (4) Individuality as an Expectation. This cycle of themes is demonstrated in image 4.1. In the next sections, the themes and supporting data patterns will be analyzed at length.

Theme 1: The Influence of Deviance The first theme resulted from data which helped the researcher see the influence of deviance. The term deviance is referred to as “a concept which is more likely to be connected with the presumed negative part of the normal distribution of human characteristics – whether measured or estimated” (Emanuelsson, 1998, p. 96). There is a distinct connection between the position and location of subjects and their interpretations of deviance. In the United States, early



Figure 4.1 Cycle of Themes

sociology research found that the general tendency was to see disabilities as a deviance from the norms of social behavior (Harber & Smith, 1971). This history is evident in the responses given by the subjects from America. While in Denmark, deviance is historically a foreign term, Danes are often perceived as a cohesive group representing a welfare model, with a strong emphasis on public welfare of all and social equality (Dovemark et al., 2018). This alternative history is witnessed in the perspectives viewed by the Danish subjects. In this research study, the concept of deviance described the following: learning differences as indicators for services, adjustments to teaching practices by the teacher's themselves, and in some cases, a teacher's reason for connecting to disabilities education.

Discussions of Deviance: United States

In the findings coded as learning differences in the United States included in Appendix F, perspectives are influenced by a long history of marginalized populations throughout history, through the civil rights movement, and basic human rights as being a segue to special needs policy. References to students who continually struggle in the public-school system was a reoccurring topic of conversation amongst all three of the teachers from the Georgia based school. They often spoke of the struggle of students being the reason for seeking out their institution. One of Mr. Edgerton's first response stated, "Parents are just desperate to find a spot where they can fit in and have some normalcy." His concern that students come to him feeling depleted, depressed, exhausted, and hungry with a chip on their shoulder and never a smile on their faces exhibits the daily struggles experienced by students with disabilities. Their deviation from the experiences of other children in regular school settings sets them apart. As he puts it, "It's like beating them down all of the time."

Mr. Jones tries to bring this struggle to light in his teaching by recognizing his deviances from the norm which allow students to connect through his empathy and sympathy for their struggle. His daily strides to adjust to the deviances and differences in his students' learning are seen as a welcomed challenge. His purpose is to "find out what isn't working with these kids and figure out a different way to reach a different learner."

In a similar approach, Mrs. Ingles entered the field of special needs education with a personal history of deviance. It was not until her seeking to modify approaches to learning that she realized her experiences were so relatable to her students. She first studied piano in Japan as a child where she learned by mimicking her instructors hand movements and never learning to read music. When she interviewed for a college program at a music conservatory, it was clear that she did not speak their language of reading notes. This acknowledgment reflects directly on the perspectives she has for her students. In her descriptions, she refers to notation reading as "trying to learn a foreign language as an adult." In her discussions with her students, they ask themselves, "Why can't I do this and am I not good enough?" But, at the Georgia school, these barriers are removed with the ability to take risks and experiment with music, teaching alternative forms of reading notation.

Discussions of Deviance: Denmark

While interviewing teachers from Denmark a different understanding of deviance in students with special needs influenced teacher perceptions. Similarly, the teacher from the specialized school for severe cases saw students with learning differences as an extension of the egalitarian Danish philosophies, while the teachers from the regular public school had a harder time maneuvering amongst deviance. The entire approach of what is allowable by law is different in Denmark, thus creating a different ideology in the Danish perception of what is deviant.

Mrs. Denton explains, "They allow crazy things like panic rooms and parents allow them to send a child into a padded room to just go nuts if they need to." As an expatriate, she acknowledges that it sounds bad from an American viewpoint but stresses

it is not seen as adverse in Denmark and much better than having to have an adult physically restrain a child. From the perspective of a teacher in a specialized school, Mrs. Denton is disturbed that Danish policies have changed and that students who deviate from the norm are not allowed to be in a school that understands their needs, as they are different than other children's needs.

In the regular municipal school, Mrs. Andersen gets caught in the line between behavioral deviance and behavioral issues as a result of special needs. She begins by explaining, "It's hard to know if they need to be diagnosed with a learning need, or if they just weren't raised right." Expectations of behavior lead her to wonder if inclusion is beneficial to all students. She stated, "There are some students who just take all of my focus, and I think how I can get this student into another school?" This strain of thought was witnessed in both of the public-school teachers in Denmark. Mr. Lerstang also speaks of the need for constant searching for lessons that will be interesting enough to keep students with attention issues focused. Both teachers in this setting utilize Activity based LCI approaches of movement and exercise to distract excessive energy issues. This ever-present issue of acceptance of adjusting to deviances from the "norm" plagues teachers of students with special needs in the regular schooling system.

A consistent pattern in both the United States teachers' perceptions and the teachers in Denmark were an understanding of the validity of special needs diagnoses. All teachers had the view that diagnosed students who deviate from the norm are not in control of their actions. There was never a hint of the perception that somehow students who utilize their accommodations are using their need to take advantage of the system. I heard comments in Denmark such as, "It's really open here. We talk about their diagnoses." and

"I wish that our parents would seek out diagnoses and not be afraid of the stigma they perceive of labels." The traditional school in Denmark had a large Muslim population. Mr. Lerstang expressed concerns that the religious doctrines made it difficult for parents to label their children as being deviant or different. In the United States, the specialized school inherently accepts these labels as normally existing but are ignored once admitted to the school. The rule is to teach each student as individuals. The stigma of deviance is non-existent. The structure of the curriculum is seen as purely individualization that can benefit any student, even those who have not been diagnosed as deviant from the norm.

Even with the acknowledgment from parents of students with or without special needs that individualization and inherent differences of learning exists, policies are in place to address the diagnoses of deviance in both continents, providing support for the "fight" for students with special needs rights. The contrast of this comparison between Denmark and the United States is reflected in the historical framework of the classroom. Mrs. Denton has a unique perspective as an expatriate teaching in a Danish School. She has experiences from both cultures, "It is such a small school that we have the privilege of being able to tailor to each and every student, just as they are. Even if they do not fit into their "labels." In the public schools here, labels are not as harmful as they are in the States." This is emphasized in Mrs. Andersen's confused reactions to my questions about labels. She cannot even produce a Danish translation to describe words for behaviors that are seen as different. She responds often with, "It's hard to explain this in English. Thank goodness, I am friends with Mrs. Denton to help me." A consistent pattern in the Danish responses is that children need to learn to work together. Those who have extreme cases (like those at Mrs. Denton's school) are still in classes together, where they have to learn

to cope and help each other, but also help each other learn." Mrs. Andersen tries to demonstrate her understanding by reiterating her comprehension of 'labels', "They help me to know if I need to place a student in the front of the room or alter an assignment to make it easier to understand." In contrast, participants from the United States school do not include labels in their everyday language. The term 'labels' are not integrated into their world. Mr. Edgerton explains that, "What's nice about {our school} is it really puts an emphasis on and brings a lot of awareness to the children about their own learning differences and learning needs." His language never includes labels or deviance, but the natural individualization of students' differences as normal. His language is evidence of the learner-centered mentality that encompasses his teaching strategies.

Summary of Theme 1. The coding process revealed three patterns of data which seek to answer the question of teachers' perceptions from the United States and Denmark as it relates to the social equality of special needs education. These patterns directly reflect the question of perceptions of teachers in Denmark and the United States as it relates to inclusion, individualized instruction, and nontraditional instruction. The patterns formed the theme of deviance in special needs education. The first theme of deviance followed ideas of similar struggles of students as they are defined with deviance and differences. Mr. Jones sums up the deviance dilemma well, "I think everybody has a little bit of [deviance from the norm], their brain is wired a little differently and I think that has really helped me relate to their differences." Another theme is the teachers' need to adjust their approaches to address deviances from the norm, influencing their perceptions. Behavioral issues that arise distinguishing these adjustments to approaches of teaching, often serve as a red flag for diagnosing students with special needs raising

questions of the validity of those diagnoses. Policy support emerged as a result of these patterns and themes dealing with deviance. The second theme that builds from deviance, emphasizes the significance of inclusion vs. exclusion as solutions for addressing deviances present in the special needs educational system. These resulting connections identify similar approaches that are successful in improving the education of students with special needs.

Theme 2: Finding Balance: Inclusion vs. Exclusion. The ever-present balancing between inclusion and exclusion is an issue that rears its head in all of the emerging themes but warrants discussion on its own. This theme is important because of its connections to the successful teaching and growth of students with special needs. In shaping the discussion to the successful implementation of learner-centered environments, inclusion becomes the standard for schools in Denmark. While American schools require an exclusive setting to successfully implement LCI. The coding process revealed the impact of labels on this issue that shed light on the processes of thought involved in seeking student centered approaches to instruction. Participants often provided suggested solutions to addressing the benefits and costs of labeling students after diagnosis. The historical and political backgrounds of the participants as it relates to country of origin and public/private status directly affected the patterns of coding responses on inclusion verses exclusion issues that appeared in the data.

Discussion of Inclusion vs. Exclusion

In deviance issues, it becomes the deciding factor between closing a student off from the regular school environment and allowing a student to be included. In the discussions with the American teachers, the standard use of labels, "self-contained,"

"mainstreamed", and "inclusion" form the conversation in its obvious removal from the site studied. The Georgia based school is built on the premise that difference is the "norm" and labels do not apply. This mentality of playing to a student's differences as individual strengths is a product of learner-centered ideologies. The Danish classroom traditionally had policies of inclusion of all where the need was not determined by a diagnosis. In this true learner-centered approach individualization sometimes required services that required a student to move to a setting better suited to the student's learning. There was not an overt acknowledgment that separation meant exclusion from the whole, just a seeking of better services for the student. Recently with policy changes requiring that student inclusion be mandated, a different structure is set up that required all teachers to adjust their teaching and understanding of disabilities students. Once all students became integrated into the regular school system, separation was no longer in the language except in extreme cases.

The general argument between inclusion and exclusion is a balance of needs. If education for students with special needs comes from a place of meeting the individual needs of a student, then there is not one way that fits all. These patterns allude back to the learner as the center of education's goals. In Denmark, Mrs. Denton expressed her concern for the inability to see the grey area of choice, "The other piece that I think really comes into play when you talk about inclusion is the role of informed choice and deciding upon the setting for education for that child. I think there is an ongoing debate in the disability community and in the broader education field about true inclusion and what true inclusion means. The challenge of inclusion is to not have inclusion at the detriment of the child with the disability." She continues, "Kids with disabilities need the inclusion

and kids without disabilities need the inclusion with their peers with disabilities in the same setting." This approach suggests accepting a system that fits the individual needs and choices the family or student makes for themselves. Mrs. Denton claims, "If they're in a class where they maybe are not being able to control themselves, it's detrimental to them as much as it is to the other students. And so, the legislation is actually written as not to the detriment of the student, but that kind of gets glazed over because who decides what's detrimental to that student?" The similar concerns of teachers like, Mrs. Andersen and Mr. Lerstang are that there are still situations where inclusion just does not work becoming detrimental to all children involved in the process. In these situations, the teacher refers back to focusing on the learner to provide solutions.

In the United States selected school the "blanket" policy of inclusion verses exclusion does not exist, but all three teacher participants agreed that this is not the case in every setting. Public school teachers are recognizing the need to see the issue from a distinct perspective. Most of the teachers express that they know very little about the requirements of least restrictive environment. Their program practices these ideas as the norm and students all receive accommodations to their individual learning. In the American school, teachers continually commented on the fact that, "It's just not done that way here." The benefit of a secluded setting is that the rules and stipulations do not apply. In the discussion of labels, this same understanding exists with Mrs. Denton, "We don't do that in Denmark. The children need to learn to work together. Those who have extreme cases (like those we work with) as still in classes together where they have to learn to cope and help each other cope, but also help each other along." Mrs. Denton, who bridges the gap between the two countries, concludes, "By having all levels in the

same class, we find that the students who are faster learners help the slower and in that, important life lessons are learned. They both gain from the experience." In the American school, a similar sentiment is expressed by Mr. Edgerton during discussions of assessment, "It is measuring in math and computer technology skills and collaboration skills that I assess. I want them to be able to work together and collaborate together." While these ideas are not the norm in American classrooms, there are schools like the Georgia school, that have managed to move forward into ideas of inclusiveness and individualized approaches, where inclusion and exclusion are removed from the discussion. As Mr. Edgerton iterated, "I believe in the language of ability not disability." This non-traditional American ideal is possible because of his teaching placement, "I work at an independent school. So, thankfully I do not have to ever 'teach to the standards' tests." Mrs. Ingles and Mr. Jones have a similar thankful attitude at being able to teach without constraints, "I love that at my school, we have kids whose brains don't take in information the way a Neurotypical (NT) student would, and I love that we as teachers find new ways to get information to stick in their brains." and "I work at an independent school and enjoy the freedom to work at the pace of my students, instead of letting policy dictate the teaching pace." This sentiment is shared by all participants from the Georgia school. Branding and giving purpose to a school, as in its mission, is only referred to by the teachers from American schools. Danish schools have a common goal to teach everyone. While this would appear to make the decision of inclusion verses exclusion a non-issue, it really just serves to complicate the dilemma as seen in the conflicting comments of when to include and exclude a student in the traditional municipal school.

Summary of Theme 2. The coding process revealed three patterns of data which answer the question of teachers' perceptions from the United States and Denmark as it relates to the effectiveness of special needs education. These patterns directly reflect the question of perceptions of teachers in Denmark and the United States as it relates to inclusion, individualized instruction, and nontraditional instruction. These patterns formed the theme of finding balance with inclusion vs. exclusion in disabilities education. The first two themes of indicative practices and training influence each other. They speak to when inclusion and exclusion are used, but also to the need for balancing the choice of use. The third pattern, learning differences, arose out of the specialized practices in the school in the United States, while the Danish teachers are just discovering the dilemma of inclusion practices. The language associated with the second theme have traditionally been nonexistent in the Danish culture and have only become prevalent in the more recent policies being mandated. The third theme which emphasizes the significance of teaching personal advocacy in the special needs educational system will be addressed next.

Theme 3: Teaching Personal Advocacy. This same phenomenon on perceptions as viewed in inclusion vs. exclusion is seen in teaching students how to advocate for themselves. The results from each country are dictated by the culture and systems put into place throughout their history. The coding process revealed a more prominent need for self-advocacy in the United States in contrast with the less prominent focus on the Danish students with special needs due to their traditional egalitarian values. The need to fight for individualism is not as apparent. These patterns of cognitive thinking and

efficacy connect to the ideals set up in LCI to build meaning for students through their activities in the classroom.

Discussion of Teaching Personal Advocacy

The fight for rights is not as apparent in Danish culture. Rights come from a place of equality and oftentimes unwritten rules that have long existed. The concept of personal gain and protecting individual goals goes against "Janteloven" as explained in Chapter 2. Mrs. Andersen expresses, "We all have a meaning in life. They need help and I acknowledge their presence." Personal is not in the vocabulary of a person's rights. All focus is on the whole and functioning within this system as explained by Mrs. Denton, "The children need to learn to work together. They have to learn to cope and help each other cope, but also to help each other along." Mrs. Denton's experiences as a teacher in a specialized school and as an expatriate align her closely with the comments from the American teachers at the specialized school in Georgia. Her view as an outsider of egalitarianism increases her tendencies towards a correction of social efficacy rather than an acceptance that it automatically exists. She questions the lack of social equity while celebrating the equitable practices that are in place. On one hand, she mentions the lack of support that some children have from parents and the community as a whole that may see this as not their problem, while also recognizing the structures in place from a history of egalitarianism, "their talents or individual empathy is evident, not everybody is going to be a doctor, not everybody makes tons of money, if you are a plumber and that's what makes you happy then that's what you should do." She rejoices in this aspect of Danish culture, "I love that about the [Danish] school system because there's so many different options you just have to send in an application, and all is available." This is the reason

she jumped at an opportunity to teach in a Danish school and to bring her American sons and daughter to Denmark to learn.

The other participants from Denmark were not as insightful about the advocacy of their students or themselves as teachers of students with special needs. Mr. Lerstang, while eager to adjust his teaching to address individuality never mentioned attributes of the student's responsibility to advocate self-efficiency for the future. With he and Mrs. Andersen it was an understood hidden agenda that students would all produce as adults naturally from the methods and practices of their schooling. Mrs. Andersen only expressed once, after being asked if she could change anything to improve inclusivity in her classroom, that she would like to help students gain experiences that would help them realize their potential in spite of their differences.

In America, the process of self-efficacy is always apparent. Mr. Jones' motivation for advocating and encouraging students to self-advocate is evident, "I have to reteach them to think there may be a reason you might have an excuse to not have endless possibilities. This is the way your mind processes and that's what I have to constantly remind the kids." Advocacy in his mind is directly tied to independence, "I think by a certain age, when they are developing how they know how to think and develop, they are finding a way to actually be independent." Mr. Edgerton continually moves between his experiences as a special needs student, and the benefits of this association in understanding the social efficacy of his job and the needs of his students. Teaching in a specialized school for language learners opened his eyes to the way that he learned as a student. He states, "I struggled a lot with reading and writing when I was young, but I got by through other modalities like arts and sports and PE. I could think on my feet and I

was confident enough to be able to share and engage." He aligns his experiences and their benefits to the social efficacy of his students, "I realized, oh my gosh, I'm a perfect person to teach these kids."

Mr. Jones had similar revelations to utilize connectivity, "I can kind of sympathize and empathize with what they're going through." This mindset is fostered through the administration's ability to model these traits of self-efficacy as an institution. They empower their teachers to be the experts in their trade and an ability to provide students with the social capabilities to be successful adults. Mrs. Ingles comments that when teaching music as one of the arts that it's important to feel supported, "I don't ever feel undervalued here. So that's a good feeling." This feeling is handed down to her students as she empowers them to advocate for their social efficacy. She expresses this concept as, "I feel like a lot of times we're giving strategies to kids to help them reach their fullest potential, without having to go through the steps that are just so painful for them." Mr. Jones is like minded in that he strives to "give [his] students as many goals as [he] wants them to accomplish, but if it's not coming internally, it's not going to mean as much to them." He states, "I really work with my students to set small attainable goals so that they can feel like they're making progress and they're moving forward."

Mr. Jones, Mrs. Ingles, Mr. Edgerton, and Mrs. Denton all implement skills that build their students' self-esteem so that they are able to advocate for their own efficacy and success in the world. Mr. Jones recognizes the power he has in the reactions of his students to what they gain at school, "Sometimes some of it is just kind of a quality about them. They kind of hold themselves maybe a little bit higher and have a better kind of self-image about themselves." He and Mr. Edgerton claim too that this feeling of internal

happiness is why parents send their children their way, "Like they had a little more chipper to them, a constant smile on their face. They were able to engage with even like attitudes, like towards their brother and sister." This turn around in behavior and attitude effects the way that they want to learn and advocate for their learning and growth. "They like to produce; they want to learn stuff. I mean they're hungry to learn stuff." Mr. Edgerton also voices, "I think in a lot of places that they had been before; it seems like they hadn't had the opportunity to do some of the skills that they had. They were always focusing on these skills that they didn't have, and it's like it was just beating them down all the time." He excitedly tells of the change that happens with every student after they have been at his school for a few weeks, a few months, and a year, "and then all of a sudden [the parents] see this is a different kid. It happens all the time, with every single kid. It's amazing."

Summary of Theme 3. The coding process revealed four patterns of data which answer the question of perceptions of teachers from the United States and Denmark as it relates to the effectiveness of special needs education. These patterns directly reflect the question of perceptions of teachers in Denmark and the United States as it relates to inclusion, individualized instruction, and nontraditional instruction. The patterns formed the theme of personal advocacy through utilizing LCI in the curriculum. The first pattern has to do with the approach of advocacy in Denmark and its egalitarian history. The second pattern ties to the third in that the teacher's firsthand experiences with advocacy reflect on their need and ability to advocate and inspire advocacy in their students, as seen in the final pattern. The fourth theme which emphasizes the significance of

individuality as an expectation in the special needs educational system that arises from LCI will be addressed next.

Theme 4: Individuality as an Expectation. Each school, in each country, in the private and public sector all confront ideas of individuality. Individuality is an expectation that repeatedly surfaces in all of those interviewed through teacher student personal interactions and curriculum and practice as a whole. There is a general consensus amongst teachers of its importance. It becomes the solution for many problems within the special needs educational framework.

Discussion of Individuality

Individuality stands out in each of the interviews of teachers in Denmark and the United States. In the schools that specialize in special needs education, individuality is constantly mentioned as a solution for special needs educational issues. Mrs. Ingles expresses how individuality changed her experiences as a learner, "I feel like the individualized attention that I got was hugely instrumental in shaping who I was and what I wanted to do for the rest of my life." She assesses the impact of her school as, "I think they're successful mostly because we are, I mean, it's 12 kids in a class and two teachers. So, it is, it is very, very individualized." While Mr. Jones strongly adheres to individualized assessment practices, "Obviously there are benchmarks and things that you can use to measure. I always like to set goals for my students at the beginning of the year individually and then have them cycle through themselves." Using these individual assessments results in his adjustments according to student needs. He tries not to use multiple choice testing because a lot of his students struggle in this area because of their language needs. Mr. Jones also looks for ways to connect to students through his

experiences. This approach is not only used for building relationships, but also for instructional purposes. He explains his growth to this method of individualization as, "Over the last couple of years I've really been able to make it kind of tied it to more of what I'm interested in as well as kind of seeing what the kids respond to." He even takes "request" for field trips and activities and promises that if students find a way to learn that works for them and they can explain it and really articulate why it works for them, he is "all for it." His goal is for every student to improve and meets them where they are in their learning process.

In Denmark, Mrs. Denton follows a lot of the same methods in her classroom. She is always aware of her student's responses to stimuli and current temperature. If a need arises, she will completely scratch her plans and provide what students are ready to learn. She provides an anecdote of an English lesson that was met with an inability to focus in the classroom setting. So, she leaves the classroom and takes the students for a walk on the beach. Along the way, they point out all of the items that they know the English translation of, and she introduces unfamiliar words that add to their future vocabulary. The interesting phenomena is that the other two teachers in the regular municipality school never mention the word individual and do not even refer to "their" in terms of individualization. Other than adjusting placement in the classroom, activity level, and a reduced difficulty in tasks there are no changes or adjustments made to instruction for the individual. The irony is that the one comment made, wishing for a more successful inclusion effort, was to receive more individualized information on the included students. Much of this was also reflected in the discussions of lack of training for the changing of inclusion policies. Mrs. Andersen expresses, "It would be nice if we could have someone

come in and cover things like ADHD. If we could have any training in that, that would be nice. I think we could help our students much better."

Mrs. Andersen's frustration is why schools such as the specialized Danish school in her municipality and the Georgia based school are so precious in both countries. Such schools function on ideas of the individual and the ability of every student to learn. Mrs. Ingles confirms his individual focus on curriculum, " Our students are incredibly talented in certain areas and very diverse. The trick is to find the strategies that will help them to be successful and help them accept that they have to use these strategies." She claims her experience confirms that differentiation is the key to unlocking the potential in each student." Mr. Jones excitedly adds, " There's no single right way to learn information." Expressing in agreement with Mrs. Ingles that, "Our small class sizes, with a 6:1 student to teacher ratio allow for differentiation. I'm able to work individually with students and teach to their strengths in order to have a successful whole-group ensemble."

Despite the exclusion of individuality in the discussion, Danish history and culture have nurtured this idea of individuality because of its focus on the whole. Students do not have to demand that their needs are met because it is built into a "needs of the whole" system. Teachers often spoke of the community and its protection of itself. The teacher is not alone in insuring individuality. It is an expectation of the group as a whole. Mrs. Denton proclaims, "There is no division between levels in their classes either, so it matters even less that they have a "label" (no accelerated, remedial, etc.)." For this environment to succeed she states, "I think that individuality is key in a meaningful education. I believe that they can go hand in hand." It is not a completely foreign idea that American schools can develop into ones of nurturing individuality amongst the larger context of the whole.

Mr. Jones at the Atlanta, Georgia school addresses this need by, "I try to deliver content in new and innovative ways to meet the individual needs of each student while also trying to help everyone reach understanding and mastery." This sharing of goals and ideas can be accomplished in different settings.

Summary of Theme 4. The coding process revealed four patterns of data which answer the question of perceptions of teachers from the United States and Denmark as it relates to the effectiveness of special needs education and its effects on the theoretical idea of learner-centered classrooms. These patterns directly reflect the question of perceptions of teachers in Denmark and the United States as it relates to inclusion, individualized instruction, and nontraditional instruction. Patterns forming the theme individuality are demonstrated in every aspect of a teacher's perceptions. In coding patterns for individuality, the first pattern is the common link between all themes developed in the study of individuality as a solution for special needs educational issues. There is a second pattern that surfaces from the results of putting individuality solutions into place. The third pattern is within this same structure but pertains to individuality of services and the issues that arise from these services. With all of the patterns in this theme, a change of ideology is necessary. This need for change is the final pattern of individuality. These changes have the greatest potential for success when classrooms focus on the experience of the students and their learning.

Findings

Research Question 1: What motivates teachers in the United States and Denmark to work with students who have special needs?

Two questions asked of participants sought to obtain teacher's perceptions of their motivations to teach students with special needs. The first was, "What in your life drew you to work with special needs students?" Teachers in the United States gave responses that referenced personal experiences as their motivations. The history teacher, Mr. Jones, at the American school referenced his first teaching position, "I started working at Groves Academy and learned to love the population of students and small-school environment of an LD school." While the music teacher, Mrs. Ingles, at the same school pulled from her life as a musician before teaching LD students, "I have always enjoyed the challenge of finding new ways to teach music to kids that are not typical, standard methodologies. Working with this population constantly has me growing both as a musician and a teacher."

The second question looks specifically to their background before teaching to understand perceptions, "Is there anything in your upbringing that makes you connect to students with disabilities?" Mr. Edgerton explains his history of growing up in a household where his parent worked with special needs. Mr. Jones refers to a personality trait that drew him to the field, "I have always loved helping people to realize their potential, even if it wasn't on the "normal" path to success." Mrs. Ingles relates her personal experiences from life that drew her in:

I play by ear, and struggle with sight-reading music to this day, even though I majored in piano performance in undergrad and went to a music conservatory for grad school. If asked to sight-read, I get flustered, anxious, nervous, and it ends up sounding way worse than if I were relaxed and could try it. I imagine it would be like a student who cannot read at their grade level, but feels like they should be

able to, so they feel like they are failing, not smart, not where they should be, frustrated with themselves, etc. My brain doesn't work the way it should for sight-reading music, and I've learned other strategies to cope with this, to become a successful musician and teacher. I love that at my school, we have kids whose brains don't take in information the way a neurotypical student would, and I love that we as teachers find new ways to get information to stick in their brains.

There's no single right way to learn information.

Research Question 2: How do teachers in the United States and Denmark perceive inclusion, individualized instruction, and nontraditional instruction?

Inclusion

To answer the second research question, the topic of inclusion was explored with participants. Four questions were asked to help gain a better understanding of participants' perceptions of inclusion of students with special needs. The first two questions were statistical in nature, "What percentage of your students with special needs continue in an inclusive environment when promoted to the next grade and what percentage of your students with special needs continue their education past high school (gymnasium)?"

Answers such as, "All students who remain in the school are promoted," help to provide the background of data needed to frame teacher's responses to their perceptions. Teachers were clear that when students leave their schools, they do not have access to information on the student's current path. Mr. Lerstang explains that college is not always the goal of a successfully promoted student, "Many choose different education routes- hairdresser, dog groomer, construction or car maintenance to name a few."

The second set of questions lend to suggestions as evidence of participant's perceptions of needed improvements to student success after inclusion. The first question, "What do you think would help students in inclusive settings maintain successful progress toward graduation?" was met with responses such as, Mrs. Denton's suggestion, "Having teachers who provide them with life-long strategies to cope with and handle their different needs, without adult intervention" and Mrs. Ingles, "Understanding and recognizing their needs and being able to implement these strategies on their own." The second question, "Do you have any other ideas that would be beneficial for helping students prosper in inclusive classrooms?" was met with responses such as, Mr. Edgerton's suggestion, "Using contact teachers, counselors and having a proactive teaching teams are key. Using whatever resources are available and necessary for the individual student (music, quiet space, outdoor activities) also helps a great deal" and Mr. Jones' suggestion to "Have teachers focus on life skills as well as those utilized in a learning environment. Teachers who engage in collaborative planning and teaching - meeting with each other constantly to discuss students their individual needs. Discuss strategies that have worked well so they can be implemented across the teaching team."

Individualized-Instruction

As part of the second research question, individualized instruction is an important part of understanding participant's actions and reactions in the classroom. Questions such as, "How do you feel about individuality as it contrasts meeting the needs of all?" and requests for anecdotes "Tell a story that demonstrates your use of individualized instruction with a student or students," give us a more complete picture. In the United States, Mr. Edgerton, passionately responds, "I feel very strong about promoting

individuality and feel as a teacher you can meet the needs of all while individualizing education.” While Mr. Jones, excitedly responds, “I try to deliver content in new and innovative ways to meet the individual needs of each student while also trying to help everyone reach understanding and mastery.” I

n Denmark, Mrs. Andersen demonstrates her struggle with adjusting to student needs, “I have to think a lot about kids with special needs. How will they react? I have to think about how I say things and how I instruct them. I have to take care that I don’t raise my voice. Well, I can raise my voice, but it influences them a lot. I have to sit by them when I give them an assignment and make sure they are in the front of the class. They get an easier assignment than the other students do. Mrs. Andersen’s struggles with the management of students in inclusive settings is evident in her response, “It’s very important that it’s not too difficult. They will just run around the desk; they will just run outside. It effects the other students a lot. Most of them tell me that they get disturbed. They can’t concentrate. They can’t focus on the assignment. And they also tell their parents that, and the parents get back to us telling us that their children can’t focus.” While Mrs. Denton, uses individual teaching strategies to maintain management in the classroom, “I think that individuality is key in a meaningful education. I believe that they can go hand in hand. By having all levels in the same class, we find that the students who are faster learners help the slower and in that important life lessons are learned. They both gain from the experience.

In the United States, Mrs. Ingles describes an experience with GarageBand. “We use GarageBand on iPads to supplement for instruments that are too difficult to learn at an elementary level. I had a student who struggled with motor coordination but

desperately wanted to play the guitar. Swiping an iPad was much easier than strumming a guitar and provided immediate aural feedback.” In Denmark, Mrs. Andersen explains, “I gave a student with special needs a personal day schedule. It was divided into lessons and subjects. This student was waiting while the rest of the class was instructed, and then I went to him with the day schedule. It read what I expected from him, Which assignments I wanted him to do, and when to take a break. He took great advantage of this.”

Nontraditional Instruction

Nontraditional instruction flows from the perceptions of participants, such as, Mrs. Denton in Denmark, who uses individual instruction strategies to adjust to the inclusive classroom. When asked to, “Tell a story where you utilized non-traditional teaching methods with student, ie. technology, outdoor classrooms, field study, etc.” she responds with, “Another example was taking a walk and observing shells, the water, and the sand on the beach. We used descriptors in English to improve and expand vocabulary.” In the United States, Mr. Edgerton talks of, “outside in the garden,” “working with local museum,” and “beyond the classroom setting.” One of Mr. Edgerton’s experiences incorporates a collaboration of arts, science, and engineering as students design and build an ecofriendly tiny house in the garden outside of his teaching portable. At the same school, Mrs. Ingles uses Makey Makey, an electronic invention tool, that allows students to make music with a banana. The United States schools has a program called, “Sparks” that Mr. Edgerton explains as, “getting the kids outside and using lots of movement to aid in their brain functions.”

Research Question 3: How are teachers in the United States and Denmark influenced by Learner-Centered Ideologies?

To answer the third research question aspects of the previous questions are needed to understand the results. In the United States, the structure of the school itself suggests the influences of learner-centered ideologies. In the vision statement for the school, it is clear that individual growth is a priority for student success. In this direct quote from the school's website, "Deep and enduring understanding occurs when students construct meaning in their own minds and apply knowledge in new ways and across diverse and novel contexts" marks the commitment to a student's individualized understanding. Teachers reflect this goal with comments such as, Mr. Edgerton's, "My school puts an emphasis and really brings a lot of awareness to the children about their own learning differences and learning needs." Mr. Jones works with students to set individual goals, "I always like to set individual goals for my students at the beginning of the year. They need to do this themselves because you can give your students as many goals as you want them to accomplish, but if it's not coming internally it's not going to mean as much to them." The discoveries described by the teachers in the American school express an empathetic individualized approach to teaching. Mrs. Ingles states that "[she] feels like a lot of times we're giving strategies to kids to help them reach their fullest potential without having to go through steps that are just so painful for them." Her compassion on focus on each individual student was evident in the interview process.

This same compassion for the individual was evident in teachers in Denmark. Specifically, Mrs. Denton, who taught in the specialized school, devoted much of her time to individual relationships built through home visitations, adventures into the community for plays and real-world experiences, and a focus on the talents and strengths of each child. In one of her anecdotes, LCI is revealed by the connections to students'

emotional well-being in relation to the story used for an English lesson. Mrs. Denton describes, “One day I took in books for my kids. Like *Good Night Moon* and *The Velveteen Rabbit*. We read them out loud and then they talked about, well how was it to read out loud. That it was hard and really scary. I then asked questions like, ‘Are we unique?’ and “What did you feel from the story by reading it out loud.” The teachers in the government school had similar experiences with learner-centered ideologies but often had to balance the entire classroom experience with the needs of a few. Mr. Lerstang references the need to calm students down who because of their special needs become agitated and need individualized attention to stay on task. He utilized instruction with movement to build on the student’s nervous energy as a strength. Mrs. Andersen had a similar experience where a student came to fourth grade without the knowledge to read and write. She worked with the student one on one until the student was able to attain these skills.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings from a qualitative case study designed to understand perceptions of teachers from the United States and Denmark as it relates to special needs education. The findings answered the three research questions with data gathered from document analysis, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. The overview of data revealed several key themes as a result of teachers’ perceptions of their motivations and practices when working with students with special need. The factors gleaned from the coding process focus on four areas of perception and thought; the influence of deviance, finding balance: inclusion vs. exclusion, teaching personal advocacy, and individuality as an expectation. All of the educators had strong defining

events that formed their ideas and perceptions of the students they teach. Some teachers experienced special needs education through their personal special need, others watched friends and family maneuver through the system, while some were simply drawn to the field by a need to help and nurture. In the data, the connecting idea of individualization shown through from every participant as a perceived solution to the successful progression of students with special needs to independence and success.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of the Study

Chapter 5 gives an overview of the study presented, including the Problem of Practice, the purpose of the study, and research questions. The methodology and findings will be revisited in an abbreviated form. Following these restatements of previous chapters, implications and conclusions will begin with how the researcher will serve as a curriculum leader in the field of curriculum and instruction with recommendations for practice of teaching students with special needs. Finally, the dissertation will conclude with implications for further research, conclusions, and a summary of the research study.

The purpose of this comparative case study was to find the common ground for special needs teachers to engage in international discourse aimed at fostering educational equity through learner-centered teaching. This study was guided by the decision to look for commonalities in existing successful programs in Denmark and the United States. In restating the Problem of Practice, the United States and Denmark, need practicing special needs teachers to engage in international discourse aimed at fostering educational equity, as defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for special needs students (UNESCO, 1994).

The recurring problem in special needs education of little discourse pertaining to the perceptions of teachers on special needs education and students with special needs hinders the potential for an equitable education. A history of exclusion from the school

system and preparedness for joining the workforce plagues special needs reform. Countries, such as Denmark have traditionally managed to escape the trends in reform due to their inclusivity standards within education and society, but now new policies have created some of the same issues found in the United States (Engsig & Johnstone, 2015). Thus, the researcher posed the following questions to begin the discourse of similarities and differences between each country:

Research Question One- What motivates teachers in the United States and Denmark to work with students who have special needs?

Research Question Two- How do teachers in the United States and Denmark perceive inclusion, individualized instruction, and nontraditional instruction?

Research Question Three - How are teachers in the United States and Denmark influenced by Learner-Centered Ideologies?

Results Related to the Literature Review

In the literature review, an investigation of the history of special needs education informed an understanding of special needs as a human rights dilemma. In the results of the study, the United States and Denmark teachers clearly viewed inclusion as a right of students with special needs. Specifically, teachers in the US school did not appear to be as affected by legislation and policy. Their school was created as the antithesis to the mandated requirements forcing schools to honor the rights of special needs students. There are no “mountains of paperwork” or constant supervision from administration. The school in Denmark was influenced by the Danish historical views of egalitarianism, but recently forced inclusion from new policies and legislation resulted in teachers questioning the validity of inclusion representing fairness to students with special needs.

The literature reviewed on deviance verses difference was supported by the findings in each country. The US school prided itself on giving students the means to understand their differences as strengths in their learning as they developed self-advocacy for their learning. The negative connotations of “deviance” were removed from the student’s lives in school and at home. In the Danish schools, there were two sides to this dilemma. The inclusion school was caught up in altering learning and instruction for special needs students resulting in singling out students when solving behavioral issues in the classroom. The second school functioned similarly to the school in the United States in working to identify the student’s strengths needed for successful contributions to society.

The successful aspects of all of the schools was in their use of innovative practices to increase growth in students with special needs. The literature review includes general information on the benefits of an openness and flexibility in trying new practices. Specific examples included, flipped classrooms, in increase in technology, and pedagogues. The research revealed similar results of using technology and pedagogues to enhance instruction but added to these practices with researched techniques of activity-based instruction through experience and exercise. In the US teachers encouraged students to work from comfortable cushioned chairs in the hallway, standing desks, and outside classrooms. In Denmark, creativity training was performed by Pedagogues with sewing, music, and photography. Field trips were a common endeavor for students including trips to surrounding countries, local plays, and outside walking trails. The most important aspect looked at in the literature review dealt with individualization of learning. This concept continually came up in the document analysis, observations, and

interviews. Each teacher relayed anecdotal evidence of the relationships they held with students as individuals. Teachers' knew the students' special needs in learning, their likes and dislikes, and continued interactions with students outside the school day and after students progressed from their school.

Overview of the Methodology

The methodology utilized to gather information on teacher's perceptions of the special needs classroom and students with special needs followed a comparative case study design. In following Goodrick's (2014) research, behaviors were broken down into patterns that were necessary to effectively compare the three cases represented in each country. A clarification of key research questions and purpose, theories, selection of cases included and conducted, definitions of how the evidence was collected, analyzed, and synthesized, consideration of alternative explanations for the results, and reports on the findings were all included (Goodrick, 2014). A qualitative design was used to uncover the complexity of global perceptions through the collection and analysis of interviews that guided the direction of the results and conclusions.

Results and Findings

The results and findings for the study are presented in the triangulation of data gathered from three sources; document analysis, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. In processing the results from the data, four themes were gleaned from the data. The first theme that emerged was the influence of deviance and its pathway in both the United States and Denmark. The second theme dealt with finding a balance in the United States and Denmark of inclusion versus exclusion. The third theme was the teachers' ability to impart personal advocacy in students with special needs. The last and

fourth theme that emerged was a discussion of individuality in teaching from the United States and Denmark. In the study, the findings related back to the research questions through ideas of motivation, inclusion, individualized instruction, nontraditional instruction, and learner-centered ideologies supported with ample evidence from teachers' experiences and perceptions.

Implications

The first implication pertains to the idea of deviance. Although the words varied, as is common with qualitative data, the meaning with all participants was the same. The solution to deviance is a restructuring of the mind set of all involved in special needs education. Deviance is not an issue, without a norm. The phenomenon of overcrowding of diagnosis in special needs education relies on differences being seen as a problem that needs to be solved. If difference becomes the norm, then labels are not necessary. One of the buzz words in education is *differentiation*, which was created to address the growing differences of learners in the classroom. The argument could be made that every student learns differently and with this acceptance, the idea of deviance will fade. Differentiation is the key to reaching all students as individuals with unique learning abilities.

"Differentiation and skills that cross curriculum design offers students chances to expand their knowledge, both widely and intensively" (Pui, 2017, 337).

The second implication is that countries, such as the United States and Denmark, would benefit from learning from each other instead of trying to change to be alike. There are strengths and weaknesses in every system. Countries pulling together to study what works and implementing those changes serves student learning better than blanket changes based on trends and temporary economic prosperity. Denmark's natural

understanding of community and responsibility to the whole is a strength that Americans could use to improve a vast education system that often allows the perceived need of one to infringe on many. While America's ideas of capitalism and competition allow for excellence and proficiency in skills. The balance of the two philosophies produces a more cohesive learning environment than one without the other.

The third implication supports the notion of individuality and creativity to reach those aims. Differentiation and individuality require teachers to think beyond the traditional classroom. The lecture format from the front of the room and knowledge-based assessments that do not reach deeper understanding of concepts should be outdated. To truly let go of ideas of deviance and exclusion, teachers must teach from a different perspective. Students learn best from multiple approaches. Learning through experimentation, experience, and failure provide long lasting results, independence, and maturity. "The core value of self-regulated learning strategies emphasizes how learners could enhance task success rates by finding out their strengths and weaknesses, designing their own strategies to tackle challenges and, through self-evaluation, learn more about themselves" (Pui, 2017, p. 332). Students in special needs need to nurture these traits to succeed as independent representatives of society.

Recommendations for Practice

In this vast technological society, the products are available to simplify important data that should follow students as they learn. The left foot needs to know what the right foot is doing so that the body can remain upright. The same is true for services that best serve children. Mr. Cokley's (2014) theory of "The Star Trek Effect" should not be science fiction, but current reality.

An essential recommendation of this study is in regard to practice changes as it relates to professional development and teacher training. Colleges and Universities have turned their teacher education programs into studies in pedagogy without enough practical experience. This problem is a universal issue. In Denmark and the United States, teachers all expressed concerns over their level of training to survive the mind field of education. This epidemic is seen worldwide as global economies govern the methods in educational training. Vidergor, Magen-Nagar and Ilaiyan (2018) report that studies focus on the changes or challenges that need to be confronted in Europe, where Denmark resides, in the academic training in university-based education programs. A more research-based approach should be implemented into the pre-service education system for teachers as identified in the interviews and want of teachers to be trained to become successful professionally in working with students with special needs. There is a need for the teacher education in Denmark to include more training in multiple areas of teaching to provide a strong foundation of addressing any issue that should arise during their teaching experiences (2018). With this changing landscape and pressures of the global marketplace, schools need to adjust so that teachers are prepared.

Implementation Plan

Curriculum leadership and development is a necessary tool in the growing international economic forum that special needs education finds itself. As countries look to each other for guidance and solutions, leaders must delve through the materials presented to navigate the complex language and policies demanded upon educators and their students. "If curriculum leadership is to be successful in improving and advancing the effectiveness of school programs, the leadership base must be broadened"

(Mackenzie, 1949, p. 267). It is interesting that ideas from as early in history as 1949 continue to be important as society changes and evolves, "Attention might better be focused on all those who can actively foster the development of educational means more adequate for the needs of the present and emerging future (1949, p. 268.) The role of the researcher in this journey to lead and develop as a steward for prosperity and the development of generations will always be a valuable role to fill.

Participation in programs implementing research designed to understand the potential of a Global Textbook Program (2019) is a perfect application for the current studies' results. The global textbook seeks to enhance the global competency of student participants from the United States and China (N. Brunsting, personal communication, October 10, 2019), similar to the bridge formed through common practices of teachers in the United States and Denmark. The goals of each study aim to work in a relational connection between persons across the world. The potential for teachers' practices enhancing student experiences; creates a stronger implementation of the goal for individualized instruction in China as students acclimate to studying abroad in the United States.

Recommendations for Future Research

The outcomes of this research study are aimed at gaining knowledge to inform the special needs community. The findings were not geared towards any action research, but purely informational in nature. They sought to determine how the perceptions of teachers in the United States and Denmark impacted their interactions with special needs students. Recommendations for future studies utilize this gained knowledge to develop action research with two purposes. The first is to put into action the philosophies of the Activity

Learner-Centered Schooling model into the American public school special education curriculum. The second is to improve the pre-service training of special needs educators in the United States and Denmark. In the United States training on incorporating research-based practices of Activity Learner-Centered Ideologies into the public school system. Both models from the specialized school in Georgia and the public school system in Denmark provide a formula for continued research to determine if these practices can work in the large-scale special needs systems in American public schools.

Summary

The finding of multiple ideas and solutions to dilemmas of teaching students with special needs recognizes the strengths of the participants and their experiences. The research methodology provided a voice validating the perceptions of each participant in the study. The findings stressed the connections of inclusion, individualized instruction, and nontraditional instruction emphasizing the need for gathering the perceptions of each. The data collected proved the self-awareness of educators to their own craft and the complicated background balanced with present experiences that create successful classrooms with successful students. Therefore, Chapter 5 presented a qualitative understanding of teachers' perceptions of special needs students in the United States and Denmark.

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APPENDIX A CONSENT LETTER
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT

**Apples to Apples:
Special Needs Education in the United States and Denmark**

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY:

You are invited to volunteer for a research study conducted by Maria Knuckley Robinson. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, at the University of South Carolina. The University of South Carolina, Department of Education, is sponsoring this research study. The purpose of this study is to find the common ground for special needs teachers to engage in international discourse aimed at fostering educational equity through the encouragement of efficacy and individualization via learner-centered teaching. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are educators who work with special needs. This study is being done in Georgia, USA and Copenhagen, Denmark and will involve six volunteers.

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether to be a part of this study. More detailed information is listed later in this form.

Summary:

- *The expected duration of your participation is 2 months consisting of completion of a distributed Google Forms questionnaire and follow up interview. The data collected from the forms and interview will be transcribed and coded within this 2-month time period. Further interviews may be necessary to improve understanding and accuracy.*
- *Minimal foreseeable risks or discomforts are a result of the nature of the questions, lack of connections to assessment, and confidentiality (pseudonyms). Discomfort may be present among international participants due to language translation.*
- *Benefits to subjects or others that may be reasonably expected from the research include; added self-awareness and understanding gained from exploring the questions of perception.*
- *Where appropriate alternative procedures including email and messenger will be utilized to complete data collection and accuracy in interpreting the data.*

PROCEDURES:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will do the following:

1. Be assigned to a research group according to your country of origin. You do not have a choice over which group you will be assigned.
2. Complete a Google Forms questionnaire about Learner-Centered Ideologies.
3. Have your interview recorded in order to ensure the details that you provide are accurately captured.

DURATION:

Participation in the study involves completion of the Google Form questionnaire and participation in a recorded interview session. The Google Form questionnaire will take approximately 1 hour to complete. The recorded interview will take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:**Focus Groups:**

Others in the group will not hear what you say, although it is possible that they could discern your identity by the content of the data collected. The researchers cannot guarantee what you say will remain completely private, but the researchers will ask that you, and all other group members, respect the privacy of everyone in the group.

Loss of Confidentiality:

There is the risk of a breach of confidentiality, despite the steps that will be taken to protect your identity. Specific safeguards to protect confidentiality are described in a separate section of this document.

BENEFITS:

Taking part in this study is not likely to benefit you personally. However, this research may help researchers understand trends in current special needs education, as well as encourage dialogue between countries that can benefit teacher training and understanding of special needs populations.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS:

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

INCIDENTAL FINDINGS:

There will be no incidental findings in this study.

COLLECTION OF IDENTIFIABLE PRIVATE INFORMATION:

Information about you may be used for future research studies or may be shared with other researchers; however, this only will be done after identifiers linking the information to you are removed. This will be done without additional consent from you.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS:

Unless required by law, information that is obtained in connection with this research study will remain confidential. Any information disclosed would be with your express written permission. Study information will be securely stored in locked files and on password-protected computers. Results of this research study may be published or presented at seminars; however, the report(s) or presentation(s) will not include your name or other identifying information about you.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free not to participate, or to stop participating at any time, for any reason without negative consequences. In the event that you do withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept in a confidential manner. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please call or email the principal investigator listed on this form.

I have been given a chance to ask questions about this research study. These questions have been answered to my satisfaction. If I have any more questions about my participation in this study, I am to contact Maria Knuckley Robinson at 803-926-8221 or email mariaknuckleyrobinson@gmail.com.

Questions about your rights as a research subject are to be directed to, Lisa Johnson, Assistant Director, Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, 1600 Hampton Street, Suite 414D, Columbia, SC 29208, phone: (803) 777-6670 or email: LisaJ@mailbox.sc.edu.

I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form for my own records.

If you wish to participate, you should sign below.

Signature of Subject / Participant


Date

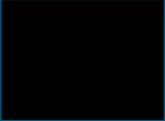

Signature of Qualified Person Obtaining Consent

Date


APPENDIX B INTERNET DOCUMENTS


Documents Retrieved from <https://www.howardschool.org>

[Parents](#) [Alumni](#) [Staff Directory](#) [Calendar](#) [Inquire](#) [Make a Gift](#) [Quicklinks](#) 



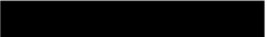
[a different approach MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.]

[Programs](#) [Athletics](#) [Admissions](#) [Advancement](#)

 / [Mission & History](#)


[FONT SETTINGS](#)

Navigation

- [Head of School Welcome](#)
- [Mission & History](#)
- [Habits of Mind](#)
- [Student Profile](#)
- [Total School Experience](#)
- [Leadership, Faculty and Staff](#)
- [Accreditation](#)
- 
- [News](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Insights Magazine](#)


Mission & History

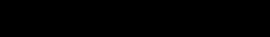
Our Mission


The  School educates students with language-based learning disabilities and learning differences through instruction designed to complement and address each student's individual needs, and to help each student understand and advocate for his or her own learning process. The curriculum focuses on depth of understanding to make learning meaningful and therefore, maximize educational success.

[Beliefs Guiding Our Desired Results For Students](#) ▶

[Desired Results For Students](#) ▶



 parent at a graduation ceremony at the Central Campus in the 1980's.



The Howard School from 1979 - 2007.

- News
- Contact
- Insights Magazine

Beliefs Guiding Our Desired Results For Students ▼

- Dignity, common decency and respect are the cornerstones of a rich, healthy living and learning environment.
- Intelligence can be nurtured and developed: it is not fixed or immutable.
- Understanding one's process of learning is as important as the knowledge itself.
- Students learn best when they have intimate knowledge of their own learning profile.
- Students' intrinsic motivation to learn is realized when they are encouraged to question, explore and take risks.
- Children acquire knowledge and express their understanding of that knowledge in many ways.
- Deep and enduring understanding occurs when students construct meaning in their own minds and apply knowledge in new ways and across diverse and novel contexts.
- Learning is a collaborative endeavor built upon trust, respect and communication among student, family, school and community.

Dr. Curtis Reding, Pam Helms, and a [REDACTED] School parent at a graduation ceremony at the Central Campus in the 1980's.



[REDACTED] School from 1979 - 2007.

Desired Results For Students ►

Desired Results For Students

- Students will know who they are as learners and their own underlying learning processes.
- Students will reflect on and assess the quality of their own learning, and will advocate for what they need to learn best.
- Students will capitalize on their strengths, and will identify and use tools and strategies in such a way that barriers to learning are diminished.
- Students will demonstrate that they are learning the curriculum content and basic skills that support the big ideas and essential questions in the curriculum.
- Students will express themselves in a variety of ways, including through the arts and movement.
- To understand something "is to see it in its relations to other things" (John Dewey). Students will know how to use their knowledge and skills to solve new problems and to think critically about their world.
- Students will extend the reach of their learning with technology, using it independently to research, author, and communicate.
- Students will understand and act upon their responsibility to the communities in which they live.

FONT SETTINGS

Standard
Open Dyslexic

Navigation

- Spotlight on Programs
- Student-led Conferences
- Language, Communication & Speech
- Literacy
- Assistive Technology
- STEAM Initiative
- W.I.N.G.S. Program
- Daily PE
- Spark
- Summer Programs
- Field Experiences
- Clubs
- Arts & Music
 - Student Art Gallery
- Tutoring
- Lower School
- Middle School
- High School

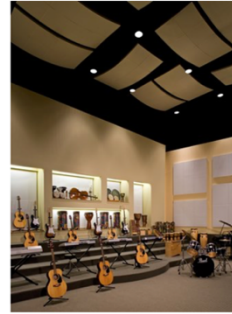
Programs / Arts & Music

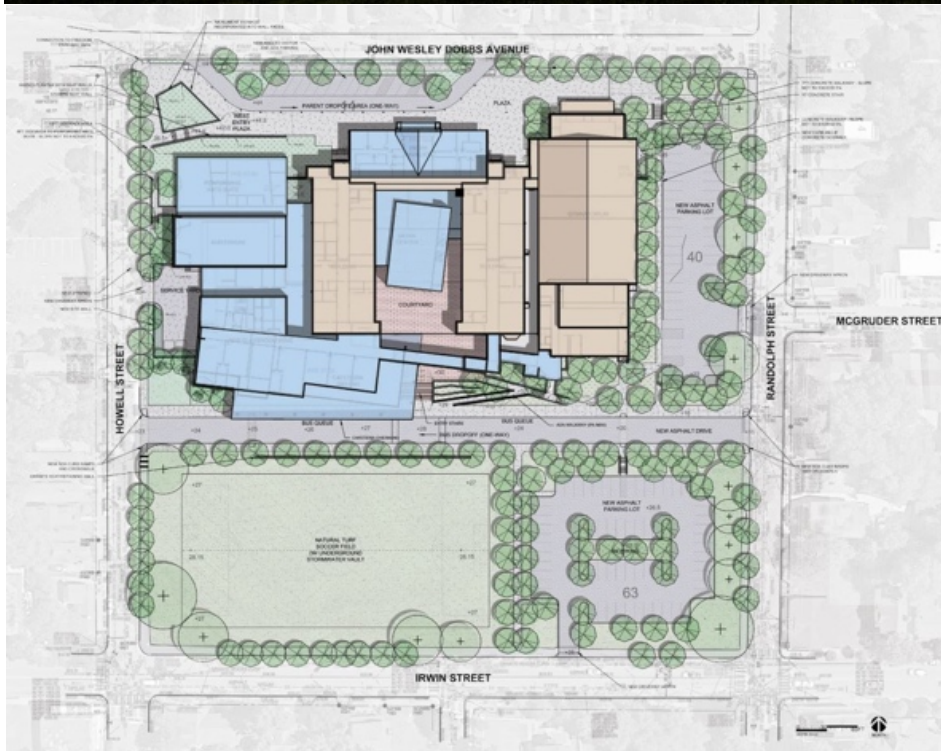
Arts & Music

At The Howard School, art and music aren't considered "Specials." These subjects are integral to our curriculum. Learning about and creating art and music requires a mix of technical knowledge and creativity that makes the brain work both receptively and expressively. Because they allow students to process and communicate ideas in different ways, art and music are often used in cross-curricular lessons to augment learning in other subjects, from math to history.

Lower School Art and Music

Lower School students have art and music classes multiple times per week. The Lower School art program uses a variety of media and techniques to enhance fine and gross motor skills and communication. Many activities are designed specifically to develop fine motor skills and visual-spatial thinking. Lessons include everything from textiles and clay to computer animation, all designed to build creative communication, visual vocabulary and problem-solving skills.





Middle and High School Art and Music

As an affiliate of the High Museum, The Howard School often collaborates with the museum to further integrate visual arts into educational curriculum. Through this partnership, affiliate schools have the opportunity to showcase our High School studio artwork at the museum in the summer of 2015. Our students' works explore a variety of media. From documented installation work to large format photography to mixed media, including an 8 ft Styrofoam robot and 3D computer model renderings, you will see some incredible pieces of art from our students.



Spark

Students need exercise so they can perform well in school. A growing body of research on how the brain works supports this finding, and teachers have known it intuitively for much longer. With daily recess and PE classes, The Howard School has been committed to movement throughout its history. But through the Spark Program, students can get the brain benefits of exercise over the course of the whole day.

&



“ Teachers have noticed that kids do better after recess. Exercise makes them more available for learning —it calms them down while it helps them focus. ”

Spark was introduced after a team of Howard School teachers attended *Learning & the Brain*, a national conference held several times a year that brings together neuroscientists and educators to explore how the brain works and its impact on classroom performance. John Ratey, Harvard Medical School professor and author of *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, inspired PE instructor Mike Hamilton and several other teachers to launch a pilot Spark exercise program at Howard that would integrate movement throughout the day. With Spark as the centerpiece, The Howard School now provides several opportunities for students to move beyond the traditional hour for recess and PE.

Active Lives

Students arrive at school between 7:30 and 8:30 a.m., gather in the gym and choose an activity, such as jumping rope, playing with balls or shooting hoops on the outdoor basketball court. Then there's the first Spark of the day —a 20-minute movement block that literally gets kids in the frame of mind to learn. Students run and walk laps, stop at the jump rope station and pass balls back and forth to keep things interesting. Everyone goes to class next, but they don't slow down. Learning centers and interactive whiteboards in the classroom get students up and moving. They can even act out their understanding of content and concepts. In one class, students become parts of a cell and move around to demonstrate cell activity.

Then it's lunchtime, half of which is recess. After refueling with food and exercise, students settle down for afternoon classes. They are encouraged to use breaks responsibly and independently — get a drink of water, walk up and down the hall and return to class, stand up and stretch, use the wall to do a few pushups and then return to their seats, or lie down to read if it's more comfortable. They work in hallways, at picnic tables or in the gazebo, or go to other rooms for small group work. Middle School students can bring a laptop to a cozy alcove and work on projects, and High School students can use hallway carrels. Halfway through the afternoon, it's time for the second Spark block. Though 20 minutes isn't a long time, students get moving right away and stay moving for the entire time. The result of all this activity? Students are doing better with Spark. We treat them as partners in their own successful learning and moving regimen, and we let them know this will help them. And they love it.

The SPARK Strategy

Indoor Spark strategies allow students to take part in their work physically, getting the movement out so they can concentrate and redirect their energy:

- Clapping, tapping syllables in the lines of a haiku or notes in a song, and writing words in the air with a finger
- Use of fidgets —small objects that keep hands busy while the mind is engaged
- Alternate seating like rocking chairs, beanbags and rubber balls
- Bungee cords on chair rungs so students can move their legs without distracting others

Field Experiences



At The Howard School, classes take advantage of the wealth of community and cultural resources in the Atlanta area and beyond through frequent field learning experiences. Some trips are day trips off campus, and some are overnight trips lasting several days. Since field experiences are an essential part of The Howard School curriculum, participation in these events for our students is equally as important as any in-school activity.



Documents retrieved from <https://www.european-agency.org>

[Home](#) > [Country Information](#) > [Denmark](#)

Country information for Denmark

The Agency was established in 1996 as an initiative of the Danish Ministry of Education. Use the links below to access the details of Denmark's national contacts, to find out more about its system for inclusive education and to explore publications, country data, projects and news relating to Denmark.



Contact information

- > [Your Agency representative](#)
- > [Ministry of Education and relevant departments](#)



Related news

- > [All related news](#)



Home



Organisation of the system for inclusive education

- > [Legislation and policy](#)
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- > [Systems of support and specialist provision](#)
- > [Teacher education for inclusive education](#)
- > [Eurypedia](#)
- > [CRPD reporting](#)
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Country resources

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- > [Projects Denmark participated in](#)
- > [Country reports from Denmark](#)



See country information for:

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Country information for Denmark - Legislation and policy

A number of acts regulate the teaching of children, young people and adults. General provisions are, laid down in the acts applying to the relevant areas, except for the Act on Special Education for Adults. Since 1980, the Act on Special Education for Adults has formed the legal basis for compensatory special education for adults with functional difficulties of a physical or psychological nature. Furthermore, there is a ministerial order on special educational support in vocational education and training, etc. Apart from these, no specific legislation applies to learners with special needs. General legislation, pertaining to the individual levels of education, more or less outlines directly that teaching is accessible to all and should be organised and performed in due consideration of pupils' different prerequisites and needs. Various provisions apply to special considerations in connection with examinations and the like.

Compulsory education is obligatory for all children from age 6 to 16. Parents are obliged to ensure education of their children and municipalities are obliged to offer schooling for everybody living in the municipality. Parents can choose to educate children at home, but only under the supervision and acceptance of local school authorities. Parents can also send children to private or free schools. These schools are to be approved by the Ministry of Education and offer education on the same level as public schools (*Folkeskolen*). Around 86% of all Danish children receive education in the *Folkeskolen* and 14% attend private schools. All education in public schools is without any costs for parents. For education in private or free schools, parents have to pay a minor part of the costs. All schools have an obligation to offer special needs education if needed, and some schools run special classes or are organised as special schools.

The *Folkeskole* Act underlines the obligation for schools to differentiate education in order to offer learners relevant and efficient education in accordance with their development, background and needs. If necessary, they can provide supplementary education. This can be in the form of more lessons – in groups or individual –, as teacher support or through pedagogical and practical assistance. The school's head teacher is responsible for organising supplementary education and for differentiation. Thus the act's goal is to differentiate education according to learners' conditions and point out the tools for providing inclusive education for all learners. The school itself, together with the parents, decides about learners' participation in supplementary education. There is no need for assessment or referral through experts, provided that the head teacher finds sufficiently clear conditions for help, together with parents. Supplementary education is a tool that clearly places responsibility for support to learners and for an inclusive

with parents. Supplementary education is a tool that clearly places responsibility for support to learners and for an inclusive approach to schooling with the local school.

According to the *Folkeskolen* Act, special needs education is still a possibility for learners, but only if supplementary education is failing to give them sufficient and efficient education. Children with a need for a special class or a special school or learners who need more than nine hours' support per week can be transferred to special needs education. This requires individual assessment through pedagogical psychological services and parental involvement in the decision process. This legislation was approved by the Danish parliament and has been in place since May 2012. The concept of special needs education in Denmark is restricted to very specialised education, with the emphasis on schools finding ways to deal with educational challenges without transferring learners to special needs education.

Municipalities run *Folkeskolen*, including mainstream schools, schools with special classes and special schools. Municipalities can transfer learners with special needs to other municipalities, but most communities create their own school system including special education. Very few specialised schools for blind, deaf and blind/deaf students are run by regional authorities, but the costs are paid by municipalities and they decide on the transfer of learners to and from these institutions. The state runs VISO and ViHS, national institutions for knowledge and specialised counselling to municipalities regarding learners with disabilities in special needs education.

Further information about the education system is available from the [Danish Ministry of Education](#) website and [Fact Sheets](#). It is possible to subscribe to general news on Danish education through an RSS feed: [English RSS feed](#).

Pre-school education

Legal provisions governing the one-year pre-school class are laid down in the *Folkeskole* Act. It states that:

- the *Folkeskole* shall comprise a one-year pre-school class, a nine-year basic school and a one-year tenth form;
- the municipal council shall be responsible for the establishment of pre-school classes;
- at parents' request, a child shall be admitted to a pre-school class in the calendar year of their sixth birthday or later;
- teaching in pre-school classes shall, as far as possible, be in the form of play and other developing activities; children shall get an insight into the daily routines of school life;
- for the pre-school class and first and second grade, parts of teaching may be integrated.

In small schools, all the teaching in these grades may be common.

From the school year 2009–2010, the length of compulsory education was extended from nine to ten years. Pre-school class was included as part of compulsory education for Danish pupils. At the same time, academic subjects for pre-school classes were clarified through a more detailed description of compulsory content and educational objectives in the pre-school class. There is a particular focus on developing language skills and learners undergo a compulsory language assessment upon enrolment.

Furthermore, the provisions introduced age-integrated classes and differentiated starting dates for learners up to the second grade. Teaching is to be performed in accordance with the rules of co-ordinated enrolment.

Compulsory school

In Denmark, education – not schooling – is compulsory. Compulsory education implies the obligation to participate in teaching provided in the *Folkeskole* or comparable to what is generally required in the *Folkeskole*. However, according to the Danish Constitution, all children of compulsory education age have a right to receive free education in the *Folkeskole* and municipalities have an obligation to offer this. Parents or persons with legal custody of children, who provide the children with instruction that meets the general requirements set out for the teaching in the *Folkeskole*, are not obliged to enrol their children in the *Folkeskole*.

Compulsory education commences on 1 August of the calendar year of a child's seventh birthday and terminates on 31 July of the year in which they have received regular instruction for nine years, not including pre-school class. This covers learners between 6 and 16/17 years of age. Apart from the compulsory grades and the pre-school year to the ninth grade, there is an optional eleventh year in the *Folkeskole* (tenth grade).

Transition period

Educational and vocational guidance is highly prioritised in Denmark. The overall structure, as well as seven national targets for guidance, are defined in the Act on Guidance in Relation to Choice of Education, Training and Career, adopted by the Danish Parliament (*Folketing*) in April 2003. The Act has been amended twice: in 2006 and 2007. The Ministry of Education is responsible for continuous supervision and development of guidance services in the educational sector.

The Act on Guidance is primarily targeted at young people up to the age of 25, but it also concerns services for adults wishing to enter a higher education programme.

There are two different types of guidance centres:

- Youth guidance centres with responsibility for guidance related to the transition from compulsory school to youth education

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- Youth guidance centres with responsibility for guidance related to the transition from compulsory school to youth education
- Regional guidance centres with responsibility for guidance related to the transition from youth education to higher education.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for a national guidance portal. It provides information on:

- Education and training possibilities at all levels
- Vocations/professions
- Labour market conditions and statistics
- Study programmes taught in English at Danish colleges and universities.

Other features include an electronic career planning tool, a section with an electronic news service, a quarterly journal and various resources, especially aimed at guidance practitioners.

The Minister of Education has established a National Dialogue Forum on Guidance in order to ensure close dialogue between the Minister and relevant organisations, institutions, guidance counsellor associations, end users and individuals with a leading position in the field of guidance.

Quality in guidance is an on-going topic of discussion in Denmark. Quality in guidance provision can be improved through improved qualifications among guidance practitioners. Six university colleges in Denmark offer a one-year modular common training programme at diploma level for guidance practitioners across sectors. Furthermore, the Danish University of Education offers a one-year Master's of Education programme in guidance counselling. In 2007, an amendment to the 2003 Act on Guidance stated that guidance practitioners working in the education system shall complete the diploma programme or, alternatively, shall prove – through assessment and recognition of prior learning – that they hold the required qualifications.

The Division for Guidance in the Danish Ministry of Education is actively involved in international co-operation in the field of guidance. The main aims and elements of the Danish guidance reform are very much in line with the European Union (EU) Resolutions on Lifelong Guidance and with EU and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development recommendations on guidance policies and practices.

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In June 2007, the *Folketing* agreed on another comprehensive plan for adult guidance services. The plan focuses on improving information and guidance services related to adult and further education and training. Four new initiatives will be implemented over a three-year period: adult guidance networks, a national centre for competence development, an internet-based guidance portal and a national adult guidance council. For more detailed information on guidance, please see the section on [Youth Guidance Centres](#) .

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Country information for Denmark - Assessment within inclusive education systems

The decision as to whether a child's development requires special consideration or support rests upon teachers' and parents' experience with the educational process and can be followed by a specific assessment in each individual case. The head teacher is responsible for all decisions about supplementary education or help to the student, following evaluation of the student's needs and consultations with teachers and parents. If there is doubt about the support required, the educational and psychological counselling service can be called to help with further testing and consultation with teachers and the pupil and their parents. Parents can ask for support from the educational-psychological advisory team to clarify the child's needs, but there is no condition for offering support in inclusive settings.

Normally teacher(s) in mainstream settings evaluate a given pupil's special needs. The local educational-psychological advisory services are obliged to give a statement upon the head teacher's request. Parents can contact the local education authorities or the educational-psychological advisory services for help, but it is the head teacher of the school who decides about the need for this service. The educational-psychological advisory services look into the nature of the need and make proposals for remedying it. The head teacher of the school decides whether a pupil will be referred to supplementary or to special needs education.

Supplementary education can be given to students to meet their individual support needs. It can be given as support in the classroom, support in small groups inside or outside the classroom, as individual support during a period or as practical support, according to the learner's needs. Supplementary education can be supervised by experts from inside and outside the school.

If students need more support than the school can provide within mainstream education, the head teacher can ask for an evaluation of the need for special needs education, which is support of more than nine hours per week or special education in special classes or special schools. In that case, the educational-psychological advisory service shall be asked for an evaluation before the head teacher decides about transferring the child to special education. Students transferred to special education need to be monitored by the educational-psychological advisory services in order to make the necessary adjustments, including discontinuation of the support.

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As far as possible, children are taught at the class level of their age. A pupil may, however, with their parents' approval, attend the same grade for two years, if it is considered to be of benefit, or they may be offered 11 years of teaching in addition to the pre-school class.

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In Denmark, inclusive schooling is both a political priority and a clear aim for schools. Legislation now also clearly explains how schools can reach these goals and where responsibility for implementation lies. At the same time, the concept of special needs education is restricted to those students who have a need for extensive and massive support in a major part of the teaching periods. This contributes to a more clear dialogue for the development of special needs education for people with disabilities.

Teaching is fundamental in Danish primary and lower-secondary schools. Each school is responsible for the variation in teaching methods, teaching materials, subjects, etc. In order to meet each pupil's needs and abilities, the head teacher ensures that each teacher provides adequate challenges to all pupils, irrespective of their varying capabilities and needs. Obligations concerning differentiated teaching concern pupils with special educational needs, as well as all other pupils. The concept of differentiated teaching constitutes the overall framework and does not specify the actual measures adopted. In effect, the individual teacher is granted substantial autonomy in providing differentiated teaching.

If differentiated teaching is not sufficient, pupils can remain in a mainstream school class and receive special education in one or more subjects as a supplement to ordinary teaching. A pupil may receive special education to replace participation in ordinary education in one or more subjects. Alternatively, teaching may be provided in a special class, either in mainstream or special settings. Finally, the pupil may attend either a mainstream school class or a special class and be taught in both types of classes.

A specific assessment will decide whether a child's development requires special consideration or support. Section 3 of the *Folkeskole Act* states that this decision must be made based on educational and psychological counselling and consultation with the pupil and their parents.

Teacher(s) in mainstream settings generally discover a given pupil's special needs. The educational-psychological counselling services examine the nature of the needs and make proposals for remedying it. The school head teacher decides whether a pupil should be referred to special education.

Special schools are, to some degree, used as advice givers in municipalities. Teachers from special schools can be used for coaching and supervision, together with educational experts from educational-psychological services, which are established in all municipalities. The tendency is that schools try to attract specialists to work within the schools themselves.

Country information for Denmark - Systems of support and specialist provision

The general objectives of supplementary and special education state that children with special needs should be taught in mainstream schools as far as possible, and that all children are entitled to teaching adapted to their prerequisites, possibilities and needs. Following this, teaching objectives are similar to those that apply to the different levels of the education system.

Development of inclusion

Since 1993, public schools in Denmark, *Folkeskolen*, have been obliged to differentiate education according to students' needs in general and not by transferring students to special needs education. However, the development has shown that there is a need for tools to help schools to engage with ordinary teaching to really differentiate the use of methods, educational materials and curricula for students with differences in development, abilities, language and culture. The clear intention of developing public schools to become more inclusive and deliver quality education to all students has not been realised. The number of students in special needs education in special classes and special schools has been increasing and schools are not more inclusive than before. One reason for this is the lack of a description of the tools schools can use for inclusive education, in order to offer relevant and efficient education to more students.

In 2012, the vast majority of the Danish parliament agreed to amend the *Folkeskolen* Act. The legislation points out the aims of a more inclusive school, capable of educating more students in the mainstream system. Furthermore, it gives schools realistic and concrete directions on how to meet educational challenges and how to organise differentiated and individual education. The act clearly gives the head teacher responsibility for creating and using tools for inclusive education.

Schools still have access to external specialised advice from pedagogical and psychological services, if the head teacher so requires or if some students are to be offered special needs education. However, schools are no longer dependent upon external advice for implementation of supplementary education or other support.

The Ministry of Education has supported municipalities and schools to implement the new legislation and to improve the level of inclusive education by forming a task force and a knowledge centre to collect information, to initiate and support research programmes and to disseminate ideas, information and knowledge.

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Support for inclusive education

In 2012, Denmark established several systems to support schools and municipalities to increase their abilities to offer quality-based education and to reduce the need to send students to special needs education. These include:

- Establishment of a task force giving advice directly to schools and school administration on how to improve inclusive education strategies in practice. This task force is based in the Ministry of Education.
- Establishment of a knowledge centre for inclusion to ensure the collection of experiences from successful schools and research for better inclusion. This unit is based in the Ministry of Education, and it communicates and initiates new knowledge and information about quality in inclusive education and in special needs education.
- In 2012 and 2013, the Ministry of Education initiated and financed a research project to evaluate and disseminate reliable scientific research in international educational literature. This is run by a university clearinghouse for development in education, and has resulted in a study giving updated information about relevant research and the outcomes of these studies on a practical level.
- Establishment of a financial state fund for development and research promoting inclusive education for students in special needs education.
- A campaign to be run by the parents' organisation and the umbrella organisation for people with disabilities in Denmark.
- Establishment of a new board of stakeholders to give advice to the government and schools about practice and knowledge across the field of special needs education and mainstream education.
- A broad political agreement on all levels to support changes in legislation and the aim of establishing a school where more students are met by differentiated and individual support.
- A decision to conduct yearly follow-up through reports on changes and outputs from the new strategy. Furthermore it has been decided to monitor development through more precise statistics and other information about special needs education and inclusion.

Free choice of school

Parents, including parents of children with special needs, have the right to enrol their child in a *Folkeskole* of their choice within the municipality of their residence or within other municipalities. This includes schools specialising in special needs education within the municipality of residence or within other municipalities. The free choice of school is, however, limited in the sense that the chosen school should be able to offer relevant support for the child with special needs and must be capable to accommodate them.

In Denmark, the legislation on special education can be organised in different ways. In most cases, the pupil remains in a mainstream school class and receives special education in one or more subjects as a supplement to general teaching. A pupil may receive special education that replaces participation in regular education in one or more subjects. Alternatively, they may be taught in a special class, either in mainstream or special school settings. Finally, the pupil may attend either a mainstream school class or a special class and be taught in both types of classes. Special classes exist for pupils with, for example, intellectual disabilities, dyslexia, visual impairment, hearing impairment, and physical disabilities.

Curricular policies, educational content and teaching and learning strategies

Planning of education courses for young people with special needs should – to the full extent possible – consider the individual's qualifications, maturity and interests and should consist of one planned and co-ordinated course.

More information is contained in the legal framework of education (in particular, new legal provisions) and Act no. 564 of 6 June 2008 on Education for Young People with Special Needs.

Aims and purposes of each education programme at each level

The objective of educational programmes for young people with special needs is to ensure that young people who have a cognitive disability and people with special needs who are not able to complete a mainstream education programme attain personal, social and vocational competencies in order to be an active and independent citizen in adulthood and, if possible, complete further education and enter the labour market. Participants receive a certificate of competencies upon completing the programme, outlining the competencies acquired during the course.

The role of schools, the municipality and the educational-psychological advisory service

Schools themselves are responsible for all decisions about supplementary education to students receiving support in mainstream education. The head teacher has the responsibility and the right to offer individualised and differentiated education to students attending the school.

For special education in schools (that is, special needs support for more than nine hours a week), in special classes and special schools, the head teacher has the obligation to follow procedures for special needs education with input from external specialists, the educational-psychological service (PPR) and other specialists. Schools are obliged to follow up on the development of children referred to special educational assistance. They meet at least once a year to discuss necessary adjustments, i.e. continuation, alterations or discontinuation of the assistance.

Based on advice from the PPR, the head teacher will decide to continue, alter or discontinue the special educational assistance provided for the child. The municipality takes decisions on special education and other special educational assistance provided by the regions. The regional council, upon consultation with the municipality, takes decisions on the contents of extensive special educational assistance. All decisions must be taken in consultation with the parents.

For infants, the PPR is obliged to re-assess each case at least every six months.

Very few and very specialised special needs education establishments are run by the regions in Denmark. They consist of three special schools for deaf and deaf-blind children, a school for blind children, a school for multiple disabilities, a school for children in an epilepsy hospital and an advisory group for small children with severe disabilities. All other special schools are run by municipalities, sometimes covering more than one municipality, but with agreements between municipalities for use of schools.

New upper-secondary education for young people with special needs

Major reforms and innovations have been introduced in the education system, in particular concerning the organisation, structure and management of the education system.

In June 2007, the Act on Education for Young People with Special Needs was passed. It mainly addresses young people who have a cognitive disability or people with special needs, who are not able to complete a mainstream education programme. The main purpose for the young person is to attain personal, social and – to the best extent possible – vocational competencies in order to be an active and independent citizen in adulthood.

This education is a legal right and is offered after compulsory primary and lower-secondary education (*the Folkeskole*). It comprises three years of training and can be attended until 25 years of age. The programme should be finalised after five years. Details of the programme are planned in co-operation with the young person, their parents and the Youth Guidance Centres (*Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning*).

Since this youth education programme is fairly new, the full extent is not yet known. It is expected to take in approximately 2.3 percent of a youth year group or almost 4,100 young people. The authority, responsibilities and financing of youth education for young people with special needs are assigned to the municipalities. The municipalities are also responsible for social welfare services and job creation programmes; thus they will be able to co-ordinate efforts to improve participation in public life for young people with special needs. By 31 May 2008, 790 students had initiated a programme of education for young people with special needs.

Obligatory assessment

Danish schools are obliged to assess students in main subjects throughout their school career. Danish should be assessed in grades 2, 4, 6 and 8. The tests are developed as adaptive tests and run by computer. It means that teachers can find out the status and profile of each student in order to be aware of the need for differentiated education or perhaps special education.

Compulsory final examinations for all

Act No. 313 of 19 April 2006 introduced compulsory final examinations at the end of the ninth grade in the *Folkeskole*. The change was made to ensure that all young people have a good academic foundation when they leave the *Folkeskole*. Thereby they will also have the best basis for completing secondary or youth education.

The introduction of compulsory final examinations means that all pupils in the *Folkeskole* must take seven examinations at the end of the ninth grade.

A school cannot obtain general exemption from participation in the final examinations for all pupils. However, in special situations the head teacher can decide to exempt a pupil from taking one or more of the examinations. This concerns pupils for whom taking the examination is found to be inappropriate due to severe disabilities or insufficient knowledge of the Danish language. The decision presupposes that it has been considered whether the pupil can take the examination under special conditions. The decision is further made on the basis of an educational and psychological evaluation of the pupil and in consultation with the parents.

Each school will have the examination results published, so it is possible for everybody to evaluate the level of education. The published results are adjusted to the level of parents' social groups. Only average results for the whole school are published and not individual results.

Pre-school education

Special educational assistance for infants is regulated by a ministerial order from 2006. Unlike school-age children, the obligation to offer special educational assistance to infants only applies to infants with speech and/or language difficulties that require special support provisions. Special assistance is offered to these children in order to prevent development that would be harmful for the child and to limit the consequences of their impairment, as well as to support and develop the child's linguistic and communicative skills. A speech/hearing therapist is normally engaged to work with the child.

The structural reform extends the responsibility for providing special assistance. Local authorities are now obliged to provide special educational assistance to all children in need of it. These extra responsibilities are related to the statutory objective of the reform. The objective of special educational assistance is to provide early intervention to children with special needs to give them equal status with other children at the start of school.

The parents can contact the PPR in their municipality and ask for special educational assistance for their child. However, a request for assistance is normally initiated by other parties who are in daily contact with the child, such as health visitors, day-care nurses, doctors or staff in nurseries or kindergartens.

The PPR is obliged to assess the child's needs for special educational assistance upon such a request.

The Ministry of Education's guidelines on special educational assistance for infants were developed in 1980. According to these, special educational assistance for infants will take place in an active learning environment and must form a well-integrated part of the overall framework of provisions put together for the child; thus it must be well co-ordinated with other activities.

This being said, special educational assistance given in the *Folkeskole* should seek to prevent placing the infant in separate teaching and/or training. The focus is on guiding parents and educationalists in day-care centres, etc., on how best to support the child's development. Furthermore, co-operation should be established with other institutions and professionals working with the same children.

Transition period

Forty-five municipal Youth Guidance Centres provide guidance to young people up to the age of 25. The 45 centres cover the 98 municipalities in Denmark, each centre covering a 'sustainable' area in terms of the number and variety of youth education institutions as well as geographical distance.

As early as during the last year of primary education (sixth grade), individual pupil plans are developed in the form of ideas about what should happen after compulsory education or the voluntary tenth grade following compulsory education.

In Denmark this transition plan is drafted partly on the basis of the so-called *Uddannelsesbogen* (Educational Record) and the *Uddannelsesplanen* (Educational Plan). This latter presents a kind of portfolio, which is created in the sixth grade and contains summaries of individual dialogues between the counsellor and the pupil on topics such as when and where the educational programme will be completed, aims of the programme and how best to achieve progress.

The Educational Record contains necessary documentation about the counselling process and the pupil's choices during this process. The course of choosing a youth educational programme or employment after schooling is also reflected in the Educational Record.

The Educational Record deals with issues such as the pupil's strengths, interests, expectations for the future and requirements for development. The pupil's efforts during a certain time span may also be stated as intermediate aims in the Educational Record.

The pupil's wishes and expectations, as stated in the Educational Record, are not binding for their future choices. They are meant to serve as guidelines for defining important issues in relation to the transition from school to further education or employment.

On the basis of the Educational Record, the pupil will prepare an Educational Plan in the ninth grade. This may be repeated in the tenth grade. The Plan will show the pupil's aims and objectives in relation to further education or employment. The reason why it could be drafted again during the tenth grade is that compulsory education finishes after the ninth grade.

To strengthen pupils' abilities to choose a programme for further education or employment, educational, vocational and labour market relations are taught as a subject during the last years of schooling. Furthermore, all pupils are offered vocational training. Young people with special educational needs are offered a more comprehensive vocational training programme than others, and they might also be offered a work-training programme of longer duration during their last years of schooling. This will be arranged either for two whole days per week, in which case the pupil will attend school for the remaining three days, or it can be for five afternoons per week, so that the pupil attends school each day from 8 am to 12 pm approximately. The pupil will receive non-tariff based remuneration, i.e. a so-called financial reward for participating in the work-training programme. This kind of work training is known in several European countries as the 'dual system'.

Furthermore, each municipality can offer all pupils the possibility to participate in a bridge-building programme in the course of the ninth and tenth grade. These are programmes combining guidance and teaching. They aim to provide the young person with better possibilities and motivation in order for them to choose and accomplish a youth education programme and to develop professional and personal qualifications. In Denmark youth education programmes cover:

- general upper-secondary education, and
- vocational upper-secondary education (e.g. vocational education and training, agricultural education, social and health education).

The duration of these bridge-building programmes varies from one to four weeks. They comprise elements from various types of schooling as mentioned above, or they can be organised so that pupils attend courses in production schools or labour market introductory courses.

Complaints

The head teacher of the school has the last word about supplementary support to students in mainstream education. However, parents can file a complaint with the municipality against the decision about special education (transfer to special needs education for more than nine hours a week in the local school, transfer to special classes or special schools). Parents can bring forward the municipal decisions concerning special educational assistance, rejections or revocations to a complaint's board dealing with extensive special educational assistance. All complaints concerning municipalities' decisions made about special education shall first be raised with the municipality. Only if the accepted agreements are not made with the parents, will the complaints be sent to the national board for special needs education complaints. The number of complaints has decreased in recent years.

Pupils with special needs in free private independent schools

Free private independent schools are obliged to offer special education and special educational services to pupils, corresponding to the services offered in the *Folkeskole*. The government provides grants towards free private independent schools. The annual budget includes special grants connected to the education of pupils with a disability as well as bilingual pupils.

The Danish Educational Support Agency administers the aid scheme on special conditions for applications, deadlines, documentation, etc. The schools apply for support, and the Agency's decision is communicated to the school, which then informs the pupil and the parents.

The support is used to compensate for the specific educational consequences of a disability (or bilingual background). This takes place in the form of special education, support education in Danish for bilingual pupils and coverage of extra expenses for special education, practical support, aids and transportation of pupils with severe disabilities.

Complaints procedure for special education in free private independent schools

The Agency administers the special educational assistance agreements for pupils with disabilities in free private independent schools, vocational training, general and vocational upper-secondary education and further and higher education. Complaints about the Agency's decisions can be made to an impartial complaints board (*Ankenævnet for Uddannelsesstøtten*). In such cases, an expert appointed by Denmark's Disabled Peoples' Organisations (DPOD) will attend. The complaints board can completely or partly change the Agency's decision. The chair of the complaints board must be a judge and a legal judgement will be made on the pupil's claim.

Quality indicators for special needs education

Teaching should enable pupils to acquire the forms of cognition and working methods of the individual subjects. They should be given the opportunity to practise and develop acquired knowledge and skills through interdisciplinary topics and issues.

The class teacher has the main responsibility for supporting pupils' subject-specific and social development and must ensure overall coherence and progression in teaching. The *Folkeskole* Act outlines the class teacher's co-ordinating role in organising teaching, including interdisciplinary teaching and teaching in mandatory subjects.

The organisation of teaching, including the choice of teaching and working methods, teaching materials and the selection of subjects, must meet the aims set by the Ministry of Education. These should be diverse and correspond to the individual pupil's needs and abilities. The head teacher ensures that the class teacher and other teachers in the class plan and organise their teaching in order to challenge all pupils. Every school year teachers and pupils co-operate continuously in each subject to determine and meet the pupils' objectives. The work should be organised in due consideration of the objectives set out. Whenever possible, working methods and selection of subjects take place in co-operation between teachers and pupils.

The concept of differentiated teaching as laid down in the *Folkeskole* Act implies that teaching should be adapted to the individual pupil to the greatest extent possible. The split into a basic and advanced level was eliminated with the Act of 1994. From the first to tenth grade, teaching may be organised in groups in the classroom or between different classes, where this is practical and sensible. At all grade levels, pupils must be taught together for the majority of the school day.

Information technology (IT) must be integrated in all subjects at all grade levels. This means IT is fully integrated into mandatory subjects and the three optional subjects. Pupils are given the possibility to acquire basic knowledge in the IT area. The integration of IT is written into the curriculum guidelines. Since the 2006–2007 school year, written pupil appraisal plans are produced for all public schools.

The pupil appraisal plan should be prepared once a year and should comprise all subjects where the pupil receives instruction. It should be short and precise in order to be a useful and easily accessible tool for teachers, pupils and parents. The pupil appraisal plan must include information on how assessment, appraisal and evaluation of the benefits of education have been conducted throughout the year. It should clearly outline how the teacher and the pupil intend to follow up on the achieved results and describe the educational goals for the period ahead.

In addition to basic skills, the *Folkeskole* is required by law to help promote each individual pupil's personal and social development according to their capability. Working methods are modified towards the pupil's attainment of greater self-reliance and maturity. This aspect of pedagogic policy requires close co-operation between school and home, and an on-going dialogue is sought among teachers, parents and pupils. The Act is very clear on this point, requiring that pupils and parents be regularly informed about the benefits of the pupil's schooling. 'Regularly' means at least twice a year and refers explicitly to information about the pupil's personal and social development, as well as academic attainments.

A series of **national tests** were introduced in spring 2007 in order to provide teachers with a tool for better overall assessment of pupils' academic level. The tests are individual and computer-based and take approximately 45 minutes.

The national tests are innovative as they are constantly adapted to the level of the individual pupil. If the pupil answers the first question correctly, the following question is automatically made slightly more difficult. If the answer is incorrect, the next question is automatically made slightly easier. Therefore, all tests will differ. When the test is completed, the computer will print out a text describing the pupil's academic level in the subject tested, exempting teachers from correcting the test assignments.

The teacher will inform the pupil of the results and these will be included in the on-going interviews between the teacher and the pupil regarding future goals for education. The school will inform the parents of the pupil's test results, not in the form of a grade but a written description of the results: a 1–2 page computer printout of the results following completion of the test.

The implementation of written pupil appraisal plans and national tests have involved continuous discussions about advantages and disadvantages. The idea of both tests and appraisal plans is to provide the teacher with an effective tool to help teachers, parents and pupils focus on the pupils' specific needs. The discussions have raised doubts as to whether the test and plans work how they are supposed to.

Denmark has established several institutions and monitoring groups with the aim of evaluating the quality of support systems for learners and the outcome of schooling.

Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut (EVA) is an independent institution conducting research for the development of quality in education for kindergarten children and for schools and educational institutions. Every year, this institution examines educational matters and evaluates them through national reports. This institution has played a central role in establishing reliable knowledge in the field of special needs education and evaluating support systems in Danish schools. EVA has contributed to give schools and authorities knowledge about schools' outcomes and has recommended changes to improve quality in education.

Another central player is **Grundskolerådet**, a permanent board appointed by the Minister for Education, to advise the minister on all questions concerning schools for children and youth. This board has members from research institutions, head teachers and teachers. It has played a very central role in the development of initiatives promoting inclusive schooling. It evaluates the development of quality in education and can propose ideas for research and development programmes.



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Tekst

Kildegårdskolen er blevet certificeret som rettighedsskole

For et år siden startede Kildegårdskolen officielt sin rejse mod at gøre principperne i FN's Børnekonvention til den "nye grundlov", som hele skolens hverdag er bygget op omkring. Skolen har siden arbejdet intenst med at oplyse eleverne om deres rettigheder og har inddraget dem i arbejdet med at forbedre trivslen på skolen. Vi har fokus på børns rettigheder i Danmark og ude i resten af verden. Der arbejdes med elevernes viden om FN's Børnekonvention og børns vilkår i andre dele af verden. I dette skoleår forsætter vi vores arbejde med en trivselsuge i uge 45 og til foråret. Vi har fokus på toiletterne og har sat en kampagne og en konkurrence i gang. Derudover bliver der arbejdet i de enkelte klasser med klassecharter, fokus på børn i andre lande og børnerettigheder.

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Opslagstavle

Mette Ortmann Hansen (MOH) den 11-10-2019

Aktuelle meddelelser

-  [Rundt om Aula \(24-04-2019\)](#)
-  [Vejledning til Unilogin \(24-04-2019\)](#)
-  [Kontaktforældre \(12-03-2019\)](#)
-  [Ansøgning til skolebuskort \(05-12-2018\)](#)
-  [Velkomst folder kommende børnehaveklassebørn 2019 \(22-11-2018\)](#)
-  [Ny skole i Herlev version4.docx \(30-10-2018\)](#)
-  [Forældresamarbejde \(15-08-2018\)](#)
-  [Trafikpolitik \(15-08-2018\)](#)
-  [Gode råd til kontaktførelserne \(04-05-2018\)](#)
-  [Udviklingsplan for Herlev Kommunes skolevæsen \(20-06-2014\)](#)

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APPENDIX C GOOGLE FORM QUESTIONNAIRE



Teacher Perceptions in Special Needs Education

Thank you for agreeing to complete these research questions. Your answers will contribute to a study on teachers perceptions in special needs education. A comparative analysis from Denmark to the United States will give insight to curriculum and instruction as it pertains to students with special needs. The research questions that form the research include:

What are the perceptions of teachers from the United States and Denmark as it relates to the effectiveness of special needs education?

Sub-Question - What are the perceptions of teachers in Denmark and the United States as it relates to inclusion vs. exclusion, whole-group vs. individualized instruction, and traditional vs. nontraditional instruction?

* Required

Name *

Your answer

Email *

Your answer

Address *

Your answer

Phone number *

Your answer

Short Biography *

Your answer

1. What do you teach? (What is your job title?) *

Your answer

2. What type of students do you regularly have in your classroom/school? *

Your answer

3. What type of training did you have for special needs education? *

Your answer

4. What in your life drew you to teach students with special needs? *

Your answer

5. Is there anything in your upbringing that makes you connect to students with disabilities? *

Your answer

6. How do you personally perceive children with disabilities? *

Your answer

7. How do you feel about individuality as it contrasts meeting the needs of all? *

Your answer

8. What are your perceptions of labels? *

Your answer

9. What do you think would happen if we removed labels? *

Your answer

10. If you were labeled as a child, how did it affect your schooling experience? *

Your answer

11. What government policies govern your teaching? *

Your answer

12. How has education policy affected the way that you teach? *

Your answer

13. Do you have any other comments that would be beneficial to understanding teacher's perceptions on teaching, their students, and educational policy? *

Your answer

May I contact you with further questions as needed? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

SUBMIT



Outcomes of LCI

Questions

Responses

Outcomes of Using Activity Learner-Centered Ideologies Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to complete these additional research questions. Your answers will contribute to additional conclusions created for the study on teachers perceptions in special needs education. In interpreting the findings of the comparative analysis from Denmark to the United States questions concerning the influences of LCI continued to appear in each school's setting. The goal of LCI is to construct learning environments that foster growth in students as they build meaning for themselves through learning and knowledge (Schiro, 2013). The research questions for the study have evolved into three final questions:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers from the United States and Denmark as it relates to their motivations for teaching students with special needs?
2. What are the perceptions of teachers in Denmark and the United States as it

Name *

Short answer text

Email *

Short answer text

1. Do you teach your students with special needs for longer than one

*

Long answer text

2. Tell a story that demonstrates your use of individualized instruction with a student or students.

*

Long answer text

3. Tell a story where you utilized non-traditional teaching methods with student, ie. technology, outdoor classrooms, field study, etc..

*

Long answer text

8. Did these two percentages increase or decrease after the 2018-2019 school year? By how much? *

Long answer text

9. Do you have access to any data with graduation rates for students with special needs? If not do you have a contact who can access that *

Long answer text

10. What do you think would help students in inclusive settings maintain successful progress toward graduation? *

Long answer text

11. Do you have any other ideas that would be beneficial for helping students prosper in inclusive classrooms? *

Long answer text

12. Do you have any other comments that would be beneficial to understanding Learner-Centered Ideologies in your school setting? *

Long answer text

May I contact you with further questions in a Skype interview? *

☐ Yes

☐ No



APPENDIX D GOOGLE FORM RESPONSES

Table D.1 Range of responses from the United States Participants.

Google Form Responses from United States Participants			
Interview Question	Mr. Edgerton	Mr. Jones	Mrs. Ingles
What is your area of expertise? (What is your job title?)	Lead Arts Teacher at the Howard School 10 Years, 12 years as coach for soccer and basketball. BFA Atlanta College of Art - Burren College of Art – SCAD.	Currently in my 9th year of teaching: 1 year as a 2nd Grade Support teacher at Park Tudor in Indianapolis, 5 years as a High School Social Studies teacher at Groves Academy in the Twin Cities, and currently in my 3rd year as an 8th Grade teacher at The Howard School in Atlanta.	This is my eighth year as the lower school music teacher at my school. I came straight from the Eastman School of Music, where I received an MA in Music Education. In my teaching, I draw upon personal experience - I love computer music and technology and music of other cultures (I spent six years of my childhood in Japan). I love my job!!
What type of students do you regularly impact in your field?	LD learners.	Each of my students has a diagnosed Learning Disability or Attention Disorder.	Students who have language-based learning differences.

What type of training did you have for special education?	In house training, Conference training, State training.	A few Special Ed classes in my Social Studies Education undergrad program at Purdue University.	One semester of a class called "Students with Disabilities" in graduate school.
What in your life drew you to work with special need students?	Personal experience.	I started working at Groves Academy and learned to love the population of students and small-school environment of an LD school.	I have always enjoyed the challenge of finding new ways to teach music to kids that are not typical, standard methodologies. Working with this population constantly has me growing both as a musician and a teacher.
Is there anything in your upbringing that makes you connect to students with disabilities?	Parent worked with special needs.	I have always loved helping people to realize their potential, even if it wasn't on the "normal" path to success.	I play by ear, and struggle with sight-reading music to this day, even though I majored in piano performance in undergrad and went to a music conservatory for grad school. If asked to sight-read, I get flustered, anxious, nervous, and it ends up sounding way worse than if I were relaxed and could try it. I imagine it would be like a student who cannot read at their grade level, but feels like they should be able to, so they feel like

			<p>they are failing, not smart, not where they should be, frustrated with themselves, etc. My brain doesn't work the way it should for sight-reading music, and I've learned other strategies to cope with this, to become a successful musician and teacher. I love that at my school, we have kids whose brains don't take in information the way a neurotypical student would, and I love that we as teachers find new ways to get information to stick in their brains. There's no single right way to learn information.</p>
How do you personally perceive children with disabilities?	With understanding, empathy, and a desire to find alternatives to assessing intelligence.	Capable, but needing direction, confidence, and guidance.	<p>I love that here at my school we call them "learning differences" rather than disabilities. Teachers here have unique skill sets to be able to think differently and outside the box in order to help students learn. In regard to music, all students have the capacity to be musical, and it's just the way that it's</p>

			presented that impacts how they learn to make music.
How do you feel about individuality as it contrasts meeting the needs of all?	I feel very strong about promoting individuality and feel as a teacher you can meet the needs of all while individualizing education.	I try to deliver content in new and innovative ways to meet the individual needs of each student while also trying to help everyone reach understanding and mastery.	Our small class sizes, with a 6:1 student to teacher ratio allow for differentiation. I'm able to work individually with students and teach to their strengths in order to have a successful whole-group ensemble.
What are your perceptions of labels?	Labels are important on packages of processed foods? On LD learners, they can help sometimes by allowing students to receive accommodations, but often hurt them in social situations outside of the classroom.	Not helpful. I like to get to know my students and make up my own opinions about them before reading what other teachers have said.	Labels are a negative force that are hard to be removed once used. Students can feel defined by a label, when that is not who they are. They are a student who learns with dyslexia, not a "dyslexic". Students should be able to define themselves, not be told "what they are."
What do you think would happen if we removed labels?	Nothing.	We'd meet the students where they are instead of where they were.	We would be teaching a more confident generation of kids who would succeed in what they want to do, not feel hindered by what they are told the outcome will probably be.
If you were labeled as a child, how did	I was not personally labeled as a child	I was labeled "gifted" and had a	I don't feel like I was labeled.

this affect your schooling experiences?	with a documented LD, but society was not as quick back then to put a label on everything. I think this movement to control everything with a label is not working.	much different education experience than some of my friends in lower classes.	
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Table D.2 Range of responses from the Denmark Participants.

Skype Responses from Denmark Participants			
Interview Question	Mrs. Andersen	Mrs. Denton	Mr. Lerstang
What is your area of expertise? (What is your job title?)	I teach Danish history, English, and Religion.	I teach English, Fitness and Nutrition (teacher).	I teach Danish, German, English, history, social studies, music/drama.
What type of students do you regularly impact in your field?	I teach fourth, fifth, and sixth grade, but mostly the fourth grade.	I have students with ADHD, schizophrenia, autism (mostly Asperger's), bipolar, and emotionally disabled or hurt. Some of them have a combination of these.	5. - 10 grades 11 years old to 16 years old Pupils in the school around 1200. In class between 18-25. There are proximity 2 pupils with a diagnose.
What type of training did you have for special education?	I have four years of education 20 years ago. There were no special classes for special education. I read an article where that is starting change in education programs now. We have an AKT teacher in Denmark it stands for communication, and that teacher	I had no training for special education.	Nope. None. You can choose that as one of your sections. Yeah, if it's one of your four.

	works with specifically our special needs students.		
What in your life drew you to work with special need students?	When it comes to children with special needs, I actually didn't like it in the beginning. They were just difficult to be around, but after a year or two, I found myself thinking a lot about how I could get those children and make them listen. I found myself wanting to bring in lessons that would have them focus and be relevant for them and interesting for them.	In elementary school, I participated in a mentoring program for physically and mentally disabled children. Many of them were the same age as I was at the time. I loved it so much that throughout my schooling, I participated in outreach programs at my church or in my community. It wasn't until I moved to Denmark, however, that I began working in a school setting.	Now that you are more or less forced to take these inclusion children. It's not so much as I said before something that I find interesting.
Is there anything in your upbringing that makes you connect to students with disabilities?	I love to see children get experiences where they find out, "Oh, that's why." I also like to learn to talk to children, so they get those experiences.	My brother had epilepsy, ADD and a mild learning disability. So yes, my upbringing had a lot to do with how I view learning disabled students and how I act and react around them. I learned almost right along- side my parents. My brother went to a special school for 3 years and we were very active in all of their activities. I learned a lot just by being present.	It's more about the relationship with the children that you get. I don't so much see them as being sick. I just see them as being in a different way.

How do you personally perceive children with disabilities?	When it comes to children with special needs, I actually didn't like it in the beginning. They were just difficult to be around. But after a year or two I found out that, I find myself thinking a lot about how I could get to those children.	That's a tough question. They are just like me. We all have our challenges, some greater than others, and we have to work together to become stronger versions of ourselves. (sorry, that's maybe not answering the question very well) How do I perceive children with disabilities? They have different ways of learning, coping and feeling than others, but don't we all have our own ways?	Well it about how they are challenged, because there are some children that are more mature than others. Let's say we do have boys who constantly have to talk, they constantly have to do something. It could also be a lack of maturity. If some of the pupils are violent, of course then I can see it. I can calm them down, but it can also be about them learning something. If they have differences, then it can be about them learning something.
How do you feel about individuality as it contrasts meeting the needs of all?	I have to think a lot about those kids with the special needs how they react. I have to think about how I say things how I instruct them. I have to take care that I don't raise my voice. Well I can raise my voice, but it influences them a lot. I have to sit by them when I give them an assignment, I have to sit by them. Make sure they are in the front of the class. So, I can help them, and I	I think that individuality is key in a meaningful education. I believe that they can go hand in hand. By having all levels in the same class, we find that the students who are faster learners help the slower and in that important life lessons are learned. They both gain from the experience.	Well we teach all children. You see we have to teach all children. Well what I think about it... It sounds horrible to say as a teacher. I don't really care about it. We have to teach on a normal level. I have some students in my class that I have to teach, but I'm not educated for special needs. I haven't been offered an education in it and I don't think I would because I don't

	<p>have to make sure that they, that they get an easier assignment, than the other students do. It's very important that it's not too difficult. They will just run around the desk; they will just run outside. It effects the other students a lot. Most of them tell me that they get disturbed. They can't concentrate. They can't focus on the assignment. And they also tell their parents that, and the parents get back to us telling us that their children can't focus. And then there's some students would just, I had all my focus is, um, how can this student get another school offer because it's not here and I'm not the only one that's saying that.</p>		<p>really have an interest in it.</p>
<p>What are your perceptions of labels?</p>	<p>You don't know what it is, and you have to be certain that you know what it is. Maybe they are just not raised well enough. It takes time to find out. I think we are more aware of labels because five years ago the government</p>	<p>Labels can be helpful in that they give information. Information about what it is that the teacher, parent or support person might be dealing with. The big word is "might." Even under an individual category, I have</p>	<p>We don't have them because we don't talk about them in the classroom.</p>

	<p>told us to have kids included in the classes. They were not there before. Yes. So, we focus a lot about students who are not acting like they should.</p>	<p>found, there are so many facets and differences that don't always "meet the criteria." So more often than not, I find labels to be detrimental because they put kids in boxes. There are too many diagnoses being doled out and we have too many kids in those boxes now.</p>	
<p>What do you think would happen if we removed labels?</p>	<p>I would think that some children were not just told from home how to behave. Well many parents, like my kids need to have special needs or not special needs but you don't understand my child. But now that we know that students with special needs are in the class, I think that we, we think a lot more about it if you have the special need or is it just parents who are not supporting us enough.</p>	<p>That would depend on the school. In our small school the labels do not affect the way we treat our students. It is such a small school that we have the privilege of being able to tailor to each and every student, just as they are. Even if they don't fit into their "labels." In the public schools here, labels are not as harmful as they are in the States. Our special needs (depending on the severity) and challenged students are in the same classes as their peers. There is no division between levels in their classes either, so it matters even less that they have a</p>	<p>We have this guy that his mom doesn't want him to have a diagnosis because once she does then he will get different treatment. We actually last year that it would be nice for him to be diagnosed because then we would know how to help him.</p>

		“label.” (no accelerated, remedial, etc)	
If you were labeled as a child, how did this affect your schooling experiences?	I didn’t have any of these experiences in my past.	I was not labeled.	Labels did not exist.

Table D.3 Comparison of LCI Responses from the United States and Denmark.

Comparison of LCI Related Responses		
Interview Question	United States	Denmark
Do you teach your students with special needs for longer than one year?	Rather than reading formal music notation, I use color-coded dots for melody and sentences to help students remember rhythm (i.e. "I would like a pizza") for a certain rhythm. Students learn mostly by rote, without notation, which really helps me to assess their working memory, too. I've cut out pictures of their faces and pointed to them to show who should play their instrument when I point to their picture (both individual and group - three faces at the same time = a chord).	If a student was having a particularly rough day, I could move class outside, to the art lab or the music room. I would use whatever specific area that would work for the specific student. For example, one student was a very talented musician with autism. He was having a rough day with lots of rocking, so we sat in front of the piano while we did English. We used a song in English and while he played the song, we dissected the meaning of the lyrics.
Tell a story that demonstrates your use of individualized instruction with a student or students.	We use Garageband on iPads to supplement for instruments that are too difficult to learn at an elementary level. I had a student who struggled with motor coordination but desperately wanted to play the guitar. Swiping an iPad was much easier than strumming a guitar and provided immediate aural feedback.	I gave a student with special needs a personal day schedule. It was divided into lessons and subjects. This student was waiting while the rest of the class was instructed, and then I went to him with the day schedule. It read what I expected from him, Which assignments I wanted him to do, and when to take a break. He took great advantage of this.
Tell a story where you utilized non-	I have four years of education 20 years ago. There were no special	Yes. We had meetings bi-weekly and each meeting

traditional teaching methods with student, ie. technology, outdoor classrooms, field study, etc..	classes for special education. I read an article where that is starting change in education programs now. We have an AKT teacher in Denmark it stands for communication, and that teacher works with specifically our special needs students.	focused on an individual student. Of course, if there was a pressing issue with another, we would discuss him/her. Each student had a contact teacher that was in charge of helping them with their education plan and there for emotional support.
Do you have access to knowledge of their learning beyond your classroom? Either by other teachers during the current school year or as they progress to the next level.	Yes. We keep year-long running documents on the students as well as have conversations regularly about students. It is so interesting to hear about how a particular student is doing in another subject as it may be a completely different experience from what I observe in music class.	In elementary school, I participated in a mentoring program for physically and mentally disabled children. Many of them were the same age as I was at the time. I loved it so much that throughout my schooling, I participated in outreach programs at my church or in my community. It wasn't until I moved to Denmark, however, that I began working in a school setting.
Do you have any evidence of the long-term effects of approaching teaching in a non-traditional manner?	This year's high school music class has the most number of students that I've seen in my eight years - I would like to say that part of it has to do with their elementary training! :) The MS/HS music teacher and I work very closely to streamline their learning from one level to the next.	With these particular students, yes! They were often sent out for internships that could teach them life skills in the workplace. Many of them have steady jobs now and several have successful business owners!
What percentage of your students with special needs continue in an inclusive environment when promoted to the next grade?	If they stay in our school they all promote forward. If they transition out of our school, I don't know.	For students who move out of the school I don't know as it is a private school for special needs. All students who remain in the school are promoted.
What percentage of your students with special needs continue their education past high	I don't have access to that information.	85% Many choose different education routes- hairdresser, dog groomer, construction or car maintenance to name a few.

school (gymnasium)?		
What do you think would help students in inclusive settings maintain successful progress toward graduation?	Having teachers who provide them with life-long strategies to cope with and handle their different needs, without adult intervention. Understanding and recognizing their needs and being able to implement these strategies on their own.	Using contact teachers, counselors and having a proactive teaching teams are key. Using whatever resources are available and necessary for the individual student (music, quiet space, outdoor activities) also helps a great deal.
Do you have any other ideas that would be beneficial for helping students prosper in inclusive classrooms?	Have teachers focus on life skills as well as those utilized in a learning environment. Teachers who engage in collaborative planning and teaching - meeting with each other constantly to discuss students their individual needs. Discuss strategies that have worked well so they can be implemented across the teaching team.	Teaching the other classmates about how to help the student with difficulty is a good idea. My son has struggled with borderline Aspergers and his class was so open and loving. It was the teachers that assisted with that! He was and is accepted just as he is!

APPENDIX E INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Denmark School Interview Session January 28, 2019

Speaker 1:	00:02	Testing. One, two. Testing one, two.
Speaker 2:	00:14	Hey, how are you?
Speaker 1:	00:20	Okay. Thank you.
Speaker 2:	00:35	I love you. You're brilliant. So I will see you for a while, right?
Speaker 1:	00:47	Hmm,
Speaker 2:	00:51	you're good. I got plenty of time right now. Everybody gone. Yeah. And then you have to go back and get it right. This is, I've only spent like 30 minutes with everybody else. People won't take on. I sent you a couple of questions just because they, she commented that I needed to have things like more hard copies from you guys and so that it was more recorded and documented that it was real evident that they have people who are making stuff and so they're requiring us to be a little bit more backing ourselves, lot better. So, and I know that you, the school is already as closed down that you were in, right? And so tell me a little bit about why it closed down. It was just our, our area that was closed down. Okay. So still left there, sir. And um, uh, the Hammond School for people who were the difficulties with Adhd was severe that they couldn't be integrated schools.
Speaker 2:	02:07	And that school started very small and about finger and bigger and bigger. And it's summarizing and then Martin, it's so huge know work. They offer things like crazy things like panic rooms that parents will allow handle things and, and, and it's okay to send your child into a room that they can just go nuts if they need to make, it sounds really bad, but it's not, it's not, it's actually, it's much better than having an adult hold you

down. Right? Yeah. Yeah. I had a great, much better. Yeah. Um, and so the school like just rock it is, and then they started this stu program, which was as a partner or kids who had kind of been lost in the system, um, where, and they could come and actually finish their high school education or right before their high school I get hit and that's where I asked.

Speaker 2: [03:16](#)

And because our program was a lot more expensive than other programs. Um, they lost the, yeah. What do you at to do it? New paid for it. It was never been funded. Who was the Copenhagen Caminos funding it. Okay. So, I guess what I'd looked up stuff, it's, it's the municipalities have like different, like they control their school within their area. Exactly. And they can show me that. Okay. Um, and we lost it because there's only three schools. They get that right in Copenhagen and our souls too expensive. But what, what it turned out that those students, like rose say amen. Yes. Yes. Uh, and you didn't meet Macheda but are Makeda if he would say it in English, um, they, they got dropped. Oh, that's sad. Maybe they got big day. There was nowhere for them to go because they were too difficult to handle.

Speaker 2: [04:19](#)

And so these other schools and they got off to you. They said, please can you take them back? We can't, we can't deal with them. Yeah. You're like, I'm sorry, we're shutting down kind of place. It was really sad. Yeah. Yeah. We're showing this one with them and they're, they're doing okay. Yeah. Versus not very well. It makes me sad. I liked her so much. She's lost 150 pounds lighter. She's in a in unit. Oh my goodness. That's horrible. Well, she's had it before. Yeah. I know that's what she was dealing with and kind of going through. So tell me a little bit about what roles you've had when you were teaching. Um, it was kind of all over the place because it was a special school. You had to be a psychologist, you have to be a teacher, you have to be a friend, you had to be a everything.

Speaker 2: [05:21](#)

Um, it was a wonderful job, but it was really hard because you get these kids that have come from these families that just, some of them don't care. Some of them do, but most of them just don't care. We're not their kids. And so it's really tough emotionally, but it was very rewarding as well. So, but specifically you were

hired to teach English, right? Yeah. And in the beginning, but it grew, um, after I, you came right back, put on nutrition and this PE or, yeah, right. It was more weight lifting. And then I got to, I expanded it to meditation and Yoga and these things. Anything that can help them. Great. Adaptable. Like what? Everyone's going to help you,

Speaker 3: [06:19](#) dude. And that was so cool. Yeah, that's really cool. Did that, did that kind of transformation lead to what you're doing now? Absolutely. Yeah. Absolutely. Because that's pretty much what you do now. You just don't do it connected to a school and you don't refer adults. I asked her work at the psychiatric hospital. Oh, you do? Okay. So just once for her, she was never a doubt cause I'm right. Yeah, my back. But work there since, I mean I've worked in that I guess a little over almost four years now, so that's cool. I like that it takes your teaching into a different realm and people don't think about the teaching that continues outside of the school. Yeah, the cat tails. That's fine. I want to be part of this wet. Thank you. Um, so tell me a couple of like specific experiences of how um, you were able to maybe be more creative in how you were doing, especially like with the English where it was more of a structured class kind of situation. How did you reach these students who needed special attention and have the special needs?

Speaker 2: [07:34](#) I had 100% right. And what I should do, I had 100% control. There was no honesty, there was none. It was a private school. I had school ray, like I could do whatever I want it to because I had very small class. Yes. I mean it was very small.

Speaker 3: [07:56](#) Um, so

Speaker 2: [07:59](#) Sundays I would have two kids, but some days I would have said, but it was numerous. Right. Um, but actually I could do like for example, I one day took in, I'm sure there's books for my kids. I'm like good night moon as the velveteen rabbit. And, and we taught, we read them out loud and we took, were passing the class and they let him out loud. And then they talked about, well how was it to read it out loud. That is hard. I'm really scared. Are we unique? Great. But also like what did you feel from the story and learn that reading it out loud, you can always feel it. Um, you don't, you don't feel it in the same way. So yeah, it's good practice just to be allowed

to go back and read it in your head like, but, but it was just awesome to have that environment where I could do whatever I want and I like talk a little bit about how you got to like take them outside of the school so often.

Speaker 2: [09:14](#)

Like I love that y'all got to go to places and do things. We weren't just, it wasn't a sketcher. Okay. If I sit in a classroom, these kids and I can feel this is not going to work. Yeah. Energy. They can't focus. There's fighting and this is my work. So say, Hey, let's end it. We're going on a walk and to have of having to focus on my, and say if we had the freedom to focus on, okay, now we're going to walk down to the beach and we're going to talk, speak English, and I'm going to say, what's the word for this? What's the word for this? Tell me what you see on that show. What does that look like? What color is it? And but not just what color is it? What shape is it? Listen to what you feel, what does it make you think?

Speaker 2: [10:04](#)

And I know it is it still open and so it's an honest way of teaching and different way [inaudible] but it's not the case everywhere. No. Right. That's what I mean. It's not the case. It did mark be everywhere. No. What can I say? It was a private school and they're trying to do this inclusion thing, which means I'm trying to speak in the past eight to 10 years and is a lot of years and if he's working on it, um, it's hard. It's a difficult thing because this is the more difficult thing you experienced to be sure and mark because you want nurses function in normal life and normal school, but there's some kids who just fall through the cracks.

Speaker 2: [10:55](#)

Did they train you in any way to handle like different situations? Did you have any like, no, no, no. Just to be honest, now I'm getting that as a very strong connecting thing between the Danish teachers is that there's not a lot of training for special needs. That if you're going to do special needs, you have to know that from the get go and when you're in school and you get to pick one of your four areas while you were in school to teach, you can pick that as an area. But if you don't, then they never even address it. Nothing is said about it. All right. Nothing's done. I mean, I was, I was lucky to get a shot, but I had an English degree or was new here and, and my opinion, Casper was doing their hats and then using an English teacher.

- Speaker 2: [11:49](#) And I mean, well, long time ago I worked with special needs students and there's are, oh, so it did it because I'm worried that they work. Right. But they now, but the ag teachers, I have to say if he did ask us. Okay. Just okay. Okay. They did. Did the pedagogies have special training? Yes. Yes. So they have this special training before the Ironman, their purpose is she would work with students with special needs, right? Yes, yes, yes. But the substitutes did not. But there's this one of the times, like on maternity leave or something like that.
- Speaker 3: [12:27](#) Yeah, yeah. What I have, we don't have substitutes at unloads the school.
- Speaker 2: [12:32](#) Yeah, yeah. We're having issues with, yeah. No, I mean,
- Speaker 3: [12:36](#) no, I mean they don't have them, but they don't, they don't exist. It's not a part of the culture here. If it says there's gold one, they write what to do on the board before they leave and the students come in and they sit in the classroom and they do their work. Um, and then they turn it in and then they go on their day and the teacher doesn't have to be in the room. It's pretty wild. I can't imagine teaching in public school and trying that one. No, I did. Real world. Yes. Different. Um, yeah. So, um, let me think. Uh, I want to make sure that I kind of cover things with you. It's a little different because I'm getting this perspective of, Oh, I know what went on. What I want to know is that, um, so since I came there and I observed your school, um, a lot has changed. There's been policies that have changed and um, and like the year, I think after I left your school, they actually put out new policy about inclusion. Yes. Yeah. And how did that affect what you were doing and how do you think that affects like your kids now that they're in schools when they're in high schools?
- Speaker 2: [13:47](#) Um, well for me, I left this pretty quickly after, and I think you came that summer. I left in Mexico, her first after that. Okay. And it was before we close, but it was because of a leader that was not good. Um, that's, that's another short, but for my kids and it has affected them. They had been several students that have been in this inclusion, um, claws and they have not punk kid. Well, kids hit up on the top of cabinets and won't come down. Absolutely. Um, there have been students that have done very well, but there are these kits and

- Speaker 2: [14:37](#) yeah. What do you do with that? You have to close the school. Little trends commune here. Did they close down because they were working on occlusion and it was a school for special students? Um, and it goes down, put them all in public school. And I would have to say, I don't know for sure, but I would have to say about 80%, but there's this 20% it didn't. And every artist don't have the separate classes. We don't have a history or are we already are. And you don't have any of that. These kids come into class where everybody is supposed to kind of work together and for 80% of them helps them. It helps us work them up. But so these other 20% they brew the rest of the class down because we don't get the education they need in the classroom and they're constructing things and it's really unfortunate for both size. Um, it's a tough, it's a tough talk.
- Speaker 3: [15:45](#) It is. It is a really tough subject I just talked to write about. Yeah
- Speaker 2: [15:50](#) cause you've won so badly because these other kids to be included in the things, but if they just can't see your work to the others.
- Speaker 3: [16:02](#) When I was, one of the things Becca said to me that I really appreciated his, she said that the idea, well, the idea of idea of the, um, the legislation is to have children had the choice to be included and so that, so that if they were included is not to their detriment.
- Speaker 2: [16:25](#) Yeah.
- Speaker 3: [16:25](#) And if they're in a class where they maybe are not being able to control themselves, it's detrimental to them as much as it is to the other students. Exactly. And so the, the legislation is actually written as not to the detriment of the student, but that kind of gets glazed over because who decides what's detrimental to that student? Yeah. Yeah. And that it kind of the who makes the decisions, pays a plays a big part. And it, and that's why when you said something about the administrator that wasn't, um, like a good administrator, that probably had a lot to do with why the school closed down.
- Speaker 2: [17:05](#) Yeah. He was, yeah. At that apartment. Yeah.

Speaker 3: [17:09](#) Yeah. I mean, because if you don't have good leadership and you don't have people that can balance both sides of things, it doesn't work well. Yeah.

Speaker 2: [17:20](#) Full picture. Just couldn't see. Okay. So he would question why are walk like with rose for example, I see this year, her class or something. Right. And she couldn't handle being in the class and one of my walking and said, it's not that it wasn't

Speaker 3: [17:39](#) teaching her change the facility that you were teaching

Speaker 2: [17:43](#) and he didn't get that, but it was just a bad hire.

Speaker 3: [17:47](#) Yeah. That sometimes at education. Yes. Yes. So, and I, I told you I wasn't going to keep you very long. I think I've gotten much better. It's helped having just this kind of conversation. Oh, the one thing I did want you to talk about that we talked about on the phone that I won't record it, is you're talking about the, um, digital into law. So just talk a little bit about how that affects things in, uh, you know, we have a lot of hidden curriculums in the United States and I see that as kind of a hidden curriculum. And how does that, how does that affect things in Denmark?

Speaker 2: [18:26](#) Um, each time I have to say, but yes. Well, I'll send it to you. You can probably find it online. So, um, then it's like you don't talk about yourself like you're something special. You should not present. You're better than me. You should not presume you know more than us. You should not presume that you can come to the table and teach us anything. And, and the list goes on and I think it's 12 or something like that. Um, but it's changed because now he's sitting in front of a new, yeah, it's a know and it's like you should know that you are worth something and you should know when he come to the table, you can, more than likely we teach us something and it's changed, but it's taking time because you know, I can culture. Yeah. So strong were some talk and I experienced and my social life, right. Oh my goodness. With my parents in law and stuff like that. They're so tough. Yeah. I really like everything. Yeah. You can do it back it up. Something, you know, your construct several nurses and um, so yeah, it's affected things, but I think it's effective them less and less because people are starting to have, we'll see in this case it's taking some time there. They're not like Americans and that way we

can't express her feelings and it's the same thing. It's kind of funny.

- Speaker 3: [19:58](#) Yeah. Well I guess it's not, you don't hear it so allowed whatever you want and say whatever you want. And it's not like that in most places.
- Speaker 2: [20:08](#) Yeah. Well not to her anyway. Yeah. I mean, you know, no place is perfect. Right. We have our good positives.
- Speaker 3: [20:17](#) [inaudible] so, um, being an expatriate they are, what are the things that you like about the school system there, um, that you think benefit your kids?
- Speaker 2: [20:29](#) Absolutely. And the kids are allowed to be kids I love as well. And lots of, they're not pressured Shamone how to read until they're seven get ever report card until there's eighth grade. Wow. Yeah, that's crazy. And it has nothing to do with whether they're challenged the, our challenge carrots in their own individual model. And I don't have any trouble social needs so it's easier for me. But, um, they have met with Joe to, for example, I've seen that she has learned how to for her, I can't stop anything oral and it cause a tea just presentation or like exams right recently and actually knows the subject and he nails it cause he was given these tools over the years that he has, he can fit. And I think that like, I mean and I hadn't been involved and um, there's no helicopter parenting or off.
- Speaker 2: [21:51](#) Yeah. And something families was of course, of course. Yeah. But it hasn't been a necessity. It just taught all along that they have the skills, they can do it and they do. But also, um, that their talents or individual empathy, not everybody is going to be a doctor. Not everybody seen him make tons of money. If you are a plumber and that's what makes you so happy and that's what you should do. And I love that about the school system because they, there's so many different options just to just have to send his application. He sent it on Tuesday or high school and get an agent. Isn't this called here? If he has no flat schools, but they were so many options. It wasn't just you go into middle school, high school, it definitely what they think you could down the road of being a painter, house painter or you get out and be a construction worker or a plumber or whatever. There was an awesome already there and I've taken a different route and I think that's so awesome here.

Speaker 3: [23:10](#) Yeah. How, how's it been with dealing with, cause you say that you don't have social needs, but you do have like Emma's dealing with stuff that has to do with identity and you know, and that's a mental need. Um, how, how has that been? And I know it hasn't been all easy.

Speaker 2: [23:30](#) Well you interviewed somebody who,

Speaker 3: [23:32](#) who I know, I know who made that and that's okay. You can talk about it. Like this is just between us. Like nobody really sees this recording. I just have to say that I've done it. Does that make sense?

Speaker 2: [23:43](#) It does. And he did not make it easier, right?

Speaker 3: [23:48](#) Yeah. Do you think it was just that person? How does, how was it with like people and the way they think and perceive to her? Um, the other kids and other teachers and

Speaker 2: [24:01](#) I think she's awesome solely ways and he is awesome. He's super open about his sexuality and that you have a husband and all that and then inspire and I've come out, like he dropped her and she did and she came out as bisexual and it, he, he didn't have a good tone in the classroom. But again, it's just, it's one teacher. Right. Um, I think I want to come down on him because he's a great person. Um, but if there was a certain tone, he, he allowed bullying to occur to sponsor because he believed as well. Gotcha. Um, he said things that were so inappropriate. He's lucky. He is.

Speaker 3: [24:57](#) How well is that regulated in Denmark? You know, here, everybody's so afraid to do anything wrong, but I don't know that I get that feeling as much. There's unions. Right. Gotcha. You're protected variables here. We're not protected at all. Teachers not really matter. So now and,

Speaker 2: [25:19](#) or who were really great in some cases are really bad ms class right now and we want a teacher and is constantly sick. We have either canceled classes or a substitute all the time and we've been talking to the leadership about it at school and nothing's, nothing's changing and it dispenses is experienced to this CMO Samuel class. Yeah. Um, yeah. And I didn't experience in

her class because Hendra he's like on top of a mom had a hairy back. Yeah. Yeah. But he also got to Adhd. You can see that too. Yeah. Yeah. He, um, Emma have made this presentation and she, Britain it and you know, he had to check it first and he said, this is the 12th, which is an eight. Plus she's, he's like, this is awesome. You're going to be correct. And so she goes in to make the presentation. He's like, oh, I forgot to tell you, I invited the other class to come in and watch you. And she's like, what? And he said, yeah, that's okay with you. Come on, let's go. And she's like, well, you know, she goes in and she does a presentation and of course she's nervous or whatever. And so in front of the whole class or the two classes, he says she got four, which is a beat. Yeah.

- Speaker 2: [26:44](#) And she is so noted. She did. I was a little nervous. I this a couple of things and so I wrote him, this is going on. He's like, I remember seeing confusion. She does flow. And they're like, but you said she got a four. And while I had to say that in front of everybody, because come on. I mean, so you know, each had this little [inaudible] thing going on and then this is really taken a toll on Emma's
- Speaker 3: [27:20](#) self esteem. Yeah. Yeah.
- Speaker 2: [27:22](#) Poorly. And you don't tell somebody they have an eight plus and they're going to give him a d and work
- Speaker 3: [27:28](#) in front of other people. That's where it matters the most.
- Speaker 2: [27:31](#) Yeah. She's a teenager per year for you too. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Right. Yeah. And think on lots choices like that one set down. Yeah. You should've been an abortion. He said to a kid, right. I mean, yeah. Okay.
- Speaker 3: [27:55](#) Yeah, I mean,
- Speaker 2: [27:56](#) I'm just telling you, yes, we had issues.
- Speaker 1: [28:01](#) Yeah,
- Speaker 3: [28:02](#) I see. Boy Now. But this has been great. Thank you. Thank you for taking time out to do this. And I hope everything goes well. Greg's mom just had a disc. I'm

fixed in her back like this past week. Okay. And that she was in so much pain she couldn't get, she couldn't move. And um, she's up like the, she had surgery and that evening she was up walking around. Oh, queen. Yes. Yes. And I mean, I'm not saying it wasn't painful and she's not in a good bit of pain afterwards, but she's able to walk and she wasn't able to walk before, so it's helped tremendously and she's able to like get around and do things and um, and the pain is getting more manageable now. Yeah. So I wish you luck. I hope everything works out okay.

- Speaker 2: [28:52](#) Okay. I saw the list of all that you have to have done and it doesn't sound fun at all. Yeah. Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah. You're strong and you're
- Speaker 3: [29:04](#) going into like surgery so healthy like your, your body's used to moving and doing things that I think that if they can fix you work since October but that's still not really that long of a period of time in perspective of like most people who are sedentary their whole lives, you know, it's a lot harder for them to like get over something like this, but you have a work ethic when it comes to your body and you know that you will like get back out there and you'll like fix yourself immediately when you get out of surgery. You'll be like in it and doing everything they you to do my best. Yeah, it'll be fine. You'll be okay? Yes. Thank you. So how long is it going to put you off?
- Speaker 2: [29:51](#) They take three months out of work after the surgery, but I got accepted to a study.
- Speaker 3: [29:56](#) Um, where are they good at?
- Speaker 2: [29:59](#) Start physical therapy earlier. Okay. You can't start until three months after. Okay. There's a lady who's doing a phd essentially. Yes. I'm going to do that. So I'm going to try that. And if it works, it works. If it doesn't, I say I can't do but at least have the option.
- Speaker 3: [30:20](#) Yeah. Yeah. Keep us up on how you're doing. So keep us knowing how you're doing and let me know how it goes with your stuff. Yeah. It's just as crazy right now. Yeah. There's a lot of stuff going on. Yeah. Yeah. Salem cut me to part time. Did you know that? No. Yeah. Yeah. Well when they like pulled me away from a full time job, that was really good to be here and to start a program and

then they expect me to do my program a hundred percent. Look, I've always done it, but then they're only paying me half of the money. Yeah. So private school sometimes sucks too. Um, so I'm working a lot outside of here to try to, you know, make the money I need to do what I need to do. So, but it's okay. And you said I'm a work horse. I'm used to working a lot. It doesn't bother me.

Speaker 1: [31:11](#)

Yeah.

Speaker 2: [31:12](#)

You look awesome.

Speaker 3: [31:13](#)

Well thank you. Well, so give her baby's hugs for me. I've all of them. I can't wait to see them this summer. So the same for Alex. Yes, I will. I will. She, she said hello to you right before she had to leave to go to class. She comes to my room for her study hall and works in here. So when I came here, when I came back from teaching this morning, get the technical school, she was in here working. So, oh, it's nice. It's nice to get to see her during the day. Treat it really as a tree. That's the thing that I'll take whatever I have to from this place because I love being here with her. It makes it all worth it no matter what. I have to go through, give babies hugs. Thank you for doing this now. Good luck with everything and let us know that you could have a surgery and you're all good. We'll do alright. Alright. Bye.

APPENDIX F CODED FINDINGS

Georgia School Interview Session January 18, 2019

Coding Map

- (1) Deviance
- (2) Inclusion versus Exclusion
- (3) Personal Advocacy
- (4) Individuality
- (5) Learner-Centered Ideology
- (6) Professional Development

Speaker 1:	00:00:07	Okay.
Speaker 1:	00:00:09	It's recording us now. At least our voices. So that's good. It's good enough. That's good enough. Yeah. You sure? Yeah. Positive, don't, nope. Okay, good enough. Alright. Alright. So, um, some of the things that are in my research that, um, I want to see what your point is on them and get your take on things. Okay. Um, so with our research I'm making these comparisons about, um, how we view students with disabilities here in the United States versus how they view students with disabilities in Denmark. Okay. And part of that, um, through doing background research, I think it's heavily influenced on how are we are brought up being either that socialist lean or the capitalist lane has a lot of influence on that. Um, because of the fact that there's not a lot of variety in Danish culture and everybody's really similar in their mindset of what they believe and probably look, um, I think impacts a lot of that a lot.
Speaker 1:	00:01:16	Um, their whole environment is about inclusiveness. And one of the things that I liked about here is that you seem to have crossed those boundaries that are present

in most of American schools and you have that inclusive field and you don't have that. Labels don't matter so much here. It's more about learning the style of the student and being able to teach that student. And so really intrigued by that. And so, um, what I would love for you to talk more about is just kind of like where you came from, what experiences have you had an education and teaching. **What brought you to here and made you want to teach at a school that was specialized and what do you do that's creative and outside of the box that helps you be able to teach these students?** And I think one thing you've already shown me is the stuff that you're doing **outside in the garden** and **working with the museums**, all of that fits really well into going **beyond the classroom setting** and being able to teach students who need to learn in multiple formats. [inaudible] open it.

Speaker 2:

[00:02:20](#)

Yeah, it helped you. Yeah. No, that's fine. I, um, I did not know that **I struggled** with so many **learning differences** until I started working at this school. Um, it really opened my eyes to the way that **I learned** as a student. And what's Nice about Howard is we, um, really put an emphasis and, and really bring a lot of **awareness to the children** about their own **learning differences** and **learning needs**. Um, I, uh, **I struggled** a lot with reading and writing when I was young and, but I got by a w through other modalities like, like **arts and sports and PE** and all that stuff, and I could think on my feet and **I was confident** enough to, uh, to be able to share and engage. So I, I really skated through a lot of my life. Um, and, and it wasn't really until I started working with children who had these **learning differences**, uh, that **I realized**, oh my gosh, um, **I'm a perfect person to teach these kids**.

Speaker 2:

[00:03:27](#)

Um, I totally get what they're, they're struggling with and it's in **the nuances of their needs** are. So, yeah, it's amazingly different, you know. Um, and I thought to myself like, um, you know, what a, what a, what a tough place to work as well because, uh, the really have **to get close to the student to really be able to help them**. Um, but with the **small class sizes** here and with the, uh, just the general, like, um, just **the feel of this place, it's very open**. A lot of kids come here because **they're struggling** from other schools and a lot of **parents are just desperate to find** a spot where they can fit in and lit, lit

and have some normalcy of, of school experience and some happiness. And so, you know, a lot of the, the theory behind what Howard is doing is that they take away some of that pressure of homework and amount of work, um, and that alleviates and that the kids and gives them a lot of, um, space to play and interact.

Speaker 2: [00:04:48](#)

And, and by doing that, all of a sudden they're opening up and once they feel comfortable, uh, with the teacher, with the class, whatever, then that, I feel like that's when the learning starts. And it isn't until the kid is full, you're like, okay, I like it here. I'm cool with these people. I can do this for the next few months or whatever. Um, it isn't until then that they are even willing to like put any effort into anything. So you really can't even gauge, like, I feel like you can't even engage how, what they're learning or, or how they're learning until that happens. And so the confidence and the comfortability, I think every parent who has a child here would say that's what they noticed first. That their kid didn't come home depleted, depressed and exhausted and hungry and who are the headache and tired. Like they had a little chip, a little does a smile on their face. They were a little more chipper. They, uh, they were able to engage with even like attitudes, like towards their brother and sister started because the parents and the child found a place that wasn't, um, it just wasn't a

Speaker 1: [00:06:01](#)

just you,

Speaker 2: [00:06:02](#)

well, it wasn't bogging them down and it also just what it wasn't, um, it wasn't sucking all the energy. It was giving them a space to play. And spark is a big thing that we do here. And getting the kids outside lots of movement and um, and times to eat snack and, um, the way we structure art and music and PE and, uh, steam all into their day and we chop it up and we break up their day. They're, they're really moving a lot, especially in the middle school, probably more so than anywhere else. And it makes sense because that's the age of that probably needs a lot of movement. Um, not that the other ones don't, but, um, so I think that's where it kind of, Howard starts. I think I've gotten off track and I don't really know what you're were talking about. Um, but, um, for me that's as a, as a parent and as a teacher, um, I, it's the first thing I noticed.

Speaker 1: [00:06:53](#)

Uh,

- Speaker 2: [00:06:55](#) and then I started to realize my own struggles and it, through all the research that we, we, we do, uh, in all the books that we read and all the discussion groups and all the conferences we go to it. And after 10 years of doing all that, it's just really opened my eyes to, um, education in general and, and, and how this school is compared to a public school or even in other private school.
- Speaker 1: [00:07:23](#) Okay.
- Speaker 2: [00:07:24](#) So they're learning differences are, uh, are, are pretty obvious for some and not so obvious for others. And, uh, it's, it's when you develop that rapport with them and then you get, you can really start burping working with all that stuff. **Uh, what training did you have before you came to this impairment?** I know once you got here that there's constant training I tell are constantly doing. Yeah. Yeah. **What was your training that led you to here?** My aunt owns a school that was a lot like the school and they all knew each other. So I kind of had an in. I probably would have not gotten this job, if not for having a little bit of a family name and, but also I was coming from an outs like so many schools at 2008, we're desperate for teachers and teachers who hadn't taught before because they had, they had found all these people flocking back in the recession that didn't really want to teach.
- Speaker 2: [00:08:23](#) They had left teaching. Um, and uh, but they knew it was a great fallback. And so all these, the economy was in shambles and everybody kind of went back to teaching because it was one of these steady kind of things. But the schools weren't interested in hiring all these teachers who didn't really want to be there again. Um, and they started for looking for outside people. And I was just getting my feet wet at this school. I started painting the school and taking out the trash. That's how I started teaching. Um, and then somebody said, hey, do you want to work with this math group? Cause we really needed a person just in here, like helping. And I said, and I did that for an hour, and then I started really have fun with the kids. Um, and then they were like, Hey, do you want to do some after school basketball?
- Speaker 2: [00:09:03](#) And I was like, sure. And then, uh, it do the, hey dude, what else do you do? You know, I'm an artist. Oh, well

we need an art teacher, you know, and it just kind of went from there. And then once I got my feet in the foot in the door, um, I started doing my certification and all that good stuff. And, um, everybody just kept telling me, you're so good with the kids. You're so good with the kids. And it's probably because I'm a little bit of a kid myself, you know. Um, I just like to play. I liked, I liked to have fun and I like to be productive, but I like to play. Um, and the kids know that here, and this is Kinda the first thing they found that we were going to play, but it's, it wasn't going to be chaotic and it w you know, it was going to be in some productive manner.

APPENDIX G PILOT STUDY OBSERVATIONS

Pilot Study Observation Field Notes

In the pilot study field notes, site observations took place in the chosen schools in Copenhagen, Denmark and Atlanta, Georgia, USA. The timing of the observations is demonstrated in Figure A.1.

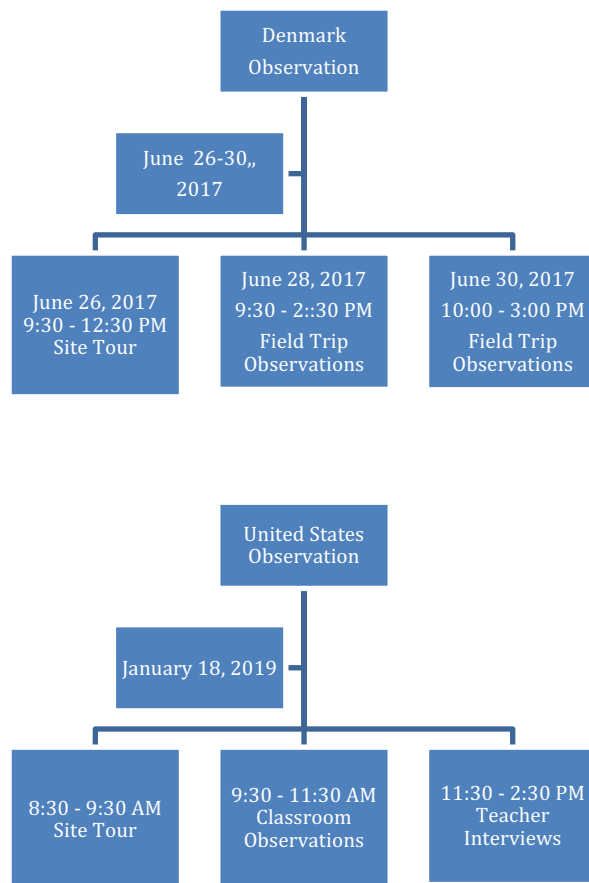


Figure A.1 Time Frame Comparison of Observations in Denmark and the United States

The pilot study also provided examples of Learner-Centered Ideology through drawings made in the observation field notes (See Figures A.2 and A.3).



Figure A.2 Field Journal Sketch of Danish Active Schooling Methods.



Figure A.3 Field Journal Sketch of American Active Schooling Methods.

The sketch from the Danish school is located in the Creative Workshop facilitated by one of the school's Pedagogues. In this classroom students are given a range of tools used in manipulating fibers and allowed to explore areas of their individual interests. The sketch from the American school is located in the music room. In this classroom setting the music teacher provides a multitude of instruments that students can freely move between during the duration of the song they are replicating from contemporary pop genres. Also, included in the field notes are descriptions of the out of classroom activities where the researcher accompanied teachers for outside instruction and play. In these observations many purposes were noted for venturing outside the classroom, including,

physical activity and experiences that would move students out of their comfort zones.

Notes were included on the observations of teacher/student relationships and interactions

(See Figure A.4).

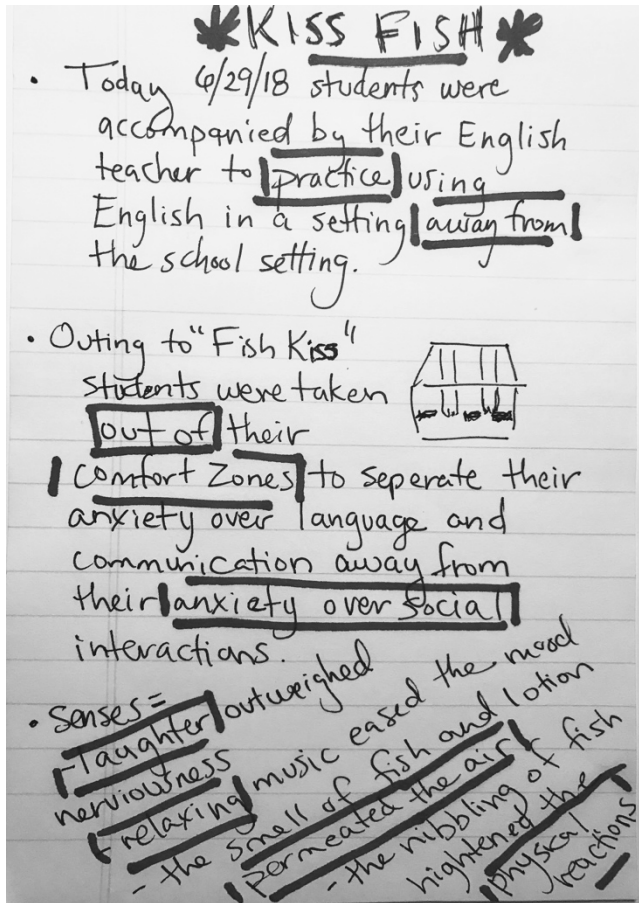


Figure A.4 Field Note Sample of Learner-Centered Ideology.

During the site visits photographic evidence was gathered to build a visual map to the perceptions and practices of the school, educators, and students making sure to include but not limited to learner-centered ideologies. These images were used to aid in the revisualization of the sites while interpreting data and forming conclusions. In Figure A.5 Activity Learner-Centered Ideology evidence is demonstrated in this inside outside musical space at the school in the United States. In Figure A.6 a photograph of the

sewing workshop is provided to give evidence of the Activity Learner-Centered Ideology being practiced by Pedagogues in Denmark.



Figure A.5 Photographic Artifact of American LCI



Figure A.6 Photographic Artifact of Danish LCI